

NO : SIN/321/30/11

High Commission of India  
SINGAPORE

(8)

Sub : Netaji - Booklet

corr. (Pages - 1 To 54)

other references

SIN/162/10/2007 INA Memorial in Singapore,

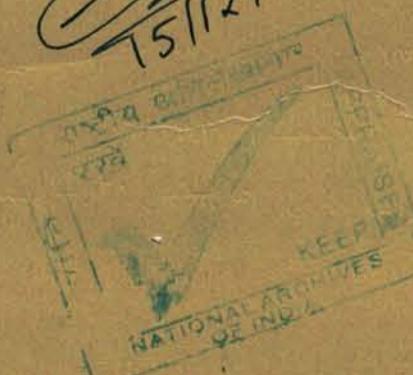
SIN/321/21/11 INA memorial

SIN/327/17/12 Visit by members of Netaji Subhash kranti manch to  
Index no. 665 Singapore in October 2012

SIN/P/162/7/2012 Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and INA Memorial,  
Index no. 716 Singapore, contains clippings of Strait Times of Jan,  
Feb. 2012

SIN/321/28/13 Indian Heritage Centre  
Index no.722

Keep  
QD/b1  
15/12/15



URGENT

(1)

High Commission of India  
Singapore

.....

The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Nalanda Sriwijaya Centre) and the High Commission had brought out a booklet on Netaji's connection with Singapore. As part of the booklet, a CD of rare film footage and audio recordings of Netaji in Singapore and Burma has been added.

The booklet is of 35 pages. The Foreword of the booklet has been written by Mr. George Yeo, Former Foreign Minister of Singapore and has contributions from Ms. Krishna Bose Chairperson, Netaji Research Bureau Kolkata, Professor Sugata Bose & Joyce Lebra, Former President of Singapore S.R. Nathan, Mr. Kwa Chong Guan, Chairman, National Archives Board, Singapore and Interviews of INA Veterans in Singapore and Malaysia.

The booklet was brought out well in time for a copy to be handed over to the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh during his official visit to Singapore from 19-20 November, 2011. 420 copies of the booklet were ordered by the High Commission. These have been received in the Chancery.

The Invoice is in order. Payment of SGD 2410/- to the Institute of SouthEast Asian Studies may kindly be authorised. Entry has been made in the Bill register against Sl. No. 6 of pages 50 & 51. The amount may be debited to the Publicity Head.

For approval please.

*Debadatta Debasish Chandrasekhar  
Attache (PIC)*

18.1.2012

FS(HOC)

*Mukherjee*

18.1.2012

~~RECORDED~~

Accountant

Paid vide Vr. No. 4127 of 01/12

# INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

(2)

11 January 2012

Invoice No.: SP5055-FY11-12

Ms Vanaja K Thekkat  
Head of Chancery  
High Commission of India, Singapore  
32 Grange Road  
Singapore 239702

## INVOICE

Netaji Booklets	SS
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Being expenses incurred for printing the above mentioned:

Booklet without DVD	@ S\$4.00/copy x 300	1,200.00
Booklet with DVD	@ S\$5.50/copy x 100	550.00
Booklet with DVD for PM's visit	@ S\$33.00/copy x 20	660.00
Total		<u>2,410.00</u>

Singapore Dollars Two Thousand Four Hundred Ten And Cent Nil Only.

Please remit to our bank account with:

Development Bank of Singapore  
6 Shenton Way  
DBS Building Tower 2  
Singapore 068809

A/c Name: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies  
A/c No.: 001-068153-2 (SGD)  
Swift Code: DBSSSGSG

*by wt*

---

Head/Administration and  
Executive Secretary to ISEAS Board of Trustees

## HIGH COMMISSION OF INDIA SINGAPORE

3

## PAYMENT VOUCHER

Thursday, January 19, 2012

Voucher No.	<b>173593-04127-0112-P</b>	Dated:	January 19, 2012
Sanction No.	UNDER DELEGATED FINANCIAL POWERS OF HOC		
Head of Accounts Clasifications	Name of Payee/ Expenditure Details	Currency	Curr. Amt. & Equiv. ₹
ADV & PUBLICITY, CHANCERY	INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES MISC. PUBLICITY	\$ (SINGAPORE)	2,410.00 100,417
Total for	INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES	Equiv. ₹	100,417

₹ Net Amount payable 100,417

Accepted, and passed for payment as under:

Sr. No.	Currency Rate of Exchange	Cheque No. Account No.	Currency Amount Equiv. ₹	Name of Receiver
1	\$ (SINGAPORE) 41.666700000	CHEQUE # 56588 2036120112	2,410.00 100,417	INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
Total \$ (SINGAPORE)				2,410.00
₹ Equiv.				100,417
₹ Total Amount				100,417

Remarks: EXPENDITURE TOWARDS THE EXPENSES INCURRED ON PRINTING THE NETAJI BOOKLET

Total Amount Equiv. ₹ 100417

(Words): One Lac Four Hundred Seventeen only

Nature of Payment: OTHER

Voucher Generated by: ADMINISTRATOR

Nature of Beneficiary: Others

Signature of Receiver(s)

Signatures of HOC/DDO

## **Vanaja K Thekkat**

---

**From:** Vanaja K Thekkat [hoc@hcisingapore.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 24 November, 2011 12:06 PM  
**To:** 'Kesavapany'  
**Subject:** RE: Bose booklet launch

Dear Sir,

Thank you for the email. High Commissioner briefed me also on this.

With regards,

---

**Vanaja K Thekkat**  
First Secretary & HOC

High Commission of India  
31 Grange Road, Singapore - 239702  
Telephone: +65-62382514 (Off.)  
E-mail: [hoc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hoc@hcisingapore.org)

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---

**From:** Kesavapany [<mailto:kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 23 November, 2011 4:23 PM  
**To:** [hoc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hoc@hcisingapore.org)  
**Subject:** Bose booklet launch

From: Kesavapany  
To: Mrs Vanaja Thekkat

Dear Mrs Thekkat,

I spoke to H.E. Raghavan this morning.

We agreed to do the Bose booklet launch on another day.

Warm regards  
Pany

**From:** Tansen Sen [tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 9 November, 2011 8:08 AM  
**To:** Ranjana Sengupta; Rinkoo; Geoff Wade; Nilanjana Sengupta; Jayati Bhattacharya; Caixa Lu; Joyce Zaide; TCA Raghavan  
**Subject:** George Yeo's foreword

Dear all,

Just received from George Yeo's foreword to the Netaji booklet. He has asked for comments and suggestions, but I think it is good enough.

We should try our best to get some advanced copies of the booklet ready by the time PM comes to Singapore. So, please go through the text of the current draft and give the corrections to Rinkoo by Friday. I would like to request Ranjana, Geoff, Nilanjana, and Joyce to give special attention to correcting/editing the text.

Rinkoo, in the meantime, please reformat the sections that we discussed and be ready to make corrections to the text over the weekend. We should look at the final draft next Monday (Nov. 14th) and have at least 20 copies printed by the time PM gets here.

Thanks.

Tansen

Foreword  
George Yeo

Many non-Indian Singaporeans are unaware of the role Singapore played in the independence struggle of India. Some, especially Chinese Singaporeans, saw Netaji as a Japanese collaborator. In a sense he was. Without the Japanese removing Mohan Singh as the leader of the Indian National Army, Netaji could not have played the role he did. (Incidentally, Mohan Singh was incarcerated in a small prison on Pulau Ubin which still stands today but now temporarily used as a seafood restaurant.)

Netaji's role in threatening the Raj by military force was a necessary complement to Gandhi's non-violent struggle. The British knew that if they did not grant India freedom, they would eventually be forced out. Persisting in the prosecution of INA soldiers after the War would only make their position in India worse.

With the detachment of time, Netaji's role in the independence of India is increasingly acknowledged across Indian society. Singaporeans are also increasingly aware and proud of the part Singapore played in that big story. It runs strangely parallel to the part Singapore played in another big story - the 1911 Revolution - which Centennial we celebrate this year. History brought two great historical figures to Singapore, Dr Sun Yat-Sen and Subhas Chandra Bose, and Singapore became a base for their monumental exertions, one to the east and the other to our west.

This was not twice an accident. Because of its geographical and cultural position in between these two civilizations, Singapore's destiny is inseparably linked to both. As it was in the 19th and 20th centuries, so too will it be in this century.

From: Tansen Sen [tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com]  
Sent: Thursday, 27 October, 2011 3:03 PM  
To: TCA Raghavan  
Cc: 'Kesavapany'  
Subject: Re: Netaji Booklet

Thanks, HC Raghavan. Yes, the booklet will be around 35 pages long, including illustrations and the coverage of the book launch.

Regards,

Tansen

---

From: TCA Raghavan <[hc@hcisgapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisgapore.org)>  
To: 'Tansen Sen' <[tansensen\\_tss@yahoo.com](mailto:tansensen_tss@yahoo.com)>  
Cc: 'Kesavapany' <[kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg)>  
Sent: Thursday, October 27, 2011 9:59 AM  
Subject: Netaji Booklet

Dear Tansen,

Glad that the Netaji Booklet is progressing well. Are we still looking at a booklet of 30 pages including photographs etc. Going through the articles it appeared to me that the scope seems to have increased?

Raghavan

---

TCA Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore

High Commission of India  
31 Grange Road  
Singapore - 239702  
Telephone: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)  
Fax: +65-67378696/67326909  
E-mail: [hc@hcisgapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisgapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcisgapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisgapore.org)



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TCA RAGHAVAN". Below the signature, there is a blue handwritten mark that looks like a stylized "DHC". To the right of the signature, the word "ATTACHMENT" is written diagonally in blue ink.

[CONFIDENTIALITY: This message (including any attachments) is confidential and/or privileged. It is to be used by the intended recipients only. If you have received it by mistake please notify the sender by return e-mail and delete this message from your system. Any unauthorized use or dissemination of this message may be an offence. ]

From: TCA Raghavan [hc@hcisingapore.org]  
Sent: Thursday, 27 October, 2011 10:00 AM  
To: 'Tansen Sen'  
Cc: 'Kesavapany'  
Subject: Netaji Booklet

~~The  
Reply~~

Dear Tansen,

Glad that the Netaji Booklet is progressing well. Are we still looking at a booklet of 30 pages including photographs etc. Going through the articles it appeared to me that the scope seems to have increased?

Raghavan

16 issued.  
by Nitulu

TCA Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore

High Commission of India  
31 Grange Road  
Singapore - 239702  
Telephone: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)  
Fax: +65-67378696/67326909  
E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)

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 ATT (DPS)

**From:** TCA Raghavan [hc@hcis Singapore.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 27 October, 2011 9:49 AM  
**To:** 'Nilanjana Sengupta'  
**Cc:** 'Tansen Sen'; 'Kesavapany'  
**Subject:** RE: Netaji booklet meeting

Dear Nilanjana,

I am glad this is proceeding well.

Raghavan

TCA Raghavan  
 High Commissioner of India to Singapore

High Commission of India  
 31 Grange Road  
 Singapore - 239702  
 Telephone: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)  
 Fax: +65-67378696/67326909  
 E-mail: [hc@hcis Singapore.org](mailto:hc@hcis Singapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcis Singapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcis Singapore.org)

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**From:** Nilanjana Sengupta [<mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 19 October, 2011 9:35 AM  
**To:** HC  
**Cc:** [tansen@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:tansen@iseas.edu.sg); [kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg); Tsewang Namgyal  
**Subject:** Re: Netaji booklet meeting

Dear High Commissioner Raghavan,

Thank you so much for the reply. We will have a good collection of photographs collected from both the NAS and NRB, Calcutta. As far as the DVD is concerned, we are working on the details for its inclusion.

Thanks & regards,  
 Nilanjana

**From:** HC <[hc@hcis Singapore.org](mailto:hc@hcis Singapore.org)>  
**To:** 'Nilanjana Sengupta' <[nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in](mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in)>  
**Cc:** [tansen@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:tansen@iseas.edu.sg); [kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg); Tsewang Namgyal <[dhc@hcis Singapore.org](mailto:dhc@hcis Singapore.org)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 18 October 2011 11:07 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Netaji booklet meeting

Dear Nilanjana

Thank you for sending this and I will go through it. I am glad to find that this is on track. Two queries: I hope we will have a dvd attachment of that wonderful clip which was shown at the book launch, and; I presume we have photographs also.

Be  
Raghavan

---

T.C.A. Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore

High Commission of India

31 Grange Road

Singapore-239702

Tel. + 65 62382510/18 (Off.)

Fax: +65-67378696/67326909

E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)

From: Nilanjana Sengupta [mailto:[nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in](mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in)]

Sent: Monday, October 17, 2011 8:51 PM

To: HCTCA Raghavan

Subject: Fw: Netaji booklet meeting

Dear High Commissioner Raghavan,

This is for your information please.

Best regards,

Nilanjana Sengupta

Visiting Research Fellow

ISEAS, Singapore

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Nilanjana Sengupta <[nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in](mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in)>

To: Tansen Sen <[tansen@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:tansen@iseas.edu.sg)>; "ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com" <[ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com](mailto:ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com)>;

Jayati Bhattacharya <[jayati@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:jayati@iseas.edu.sg)>; Geoffrey Wade <[gwade@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:gwade@iseas.edu.sg)>; Lu Caixia

<[lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg)>; Joyce Iris Zaide <[jzaide@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:jzaide@iseas.edu.sg)>; rinkoo iseas <[rinkoo@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:rinkoo@iseas.edu.sg)>

Sent: Monday, 17 October 2011 8:44 PM

Subject: Re: Netaji booklet meeting

Dear All,

I am sending the following as attached files:

1. The Table of Contents
2. Rani of Jhansi Regiment: Joyce Lebra Chapman
3. In His Footsteps: Krishna Bose
4. Remembering Bose in Singapore : Kwa Chong Guan
5. Reminiscences and Recollections: Jayati Bhattacharya
6. A Rani on Horseback: Interview with Janaki Athi Nahappan

The introduction I would send to you once I can put in the details of Prof Sugata Bose's essay (which as Tansen has mentioned is yet to come in). I would also carry a copy tomorrow for your reference.

Cheers!

Nilanjana

From: Tansen Sen <[tansen@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:tansen@iseas.edu.sg)>

To: [nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in](mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in); [ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com](mailto:ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com); Jayati Bhattacharya <[jayati@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:jayati@iseas.edu.sg)>;

Geoffrey Wade <[gwade@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:gwade@iseas.edu.sg)>; Lu Caixia <[lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg)>; Joyce Iris Zaide <[jzaide@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:jzaide@iseas.edu.sg)>

Sent: Monday, 17 October 2011 2:22 PM

Subject: Netaji booklet meeting

Dear all,

A reminder that we will be meeting tomorrow at 10.30 to discuss the Netaji booklet. I think all submissions have come in except Sugatada's, who has promised to send it in the next few days.

10

Nila~~na~~na, could you please come early and make sure there are copies for everyone to go through.

Jayati, please inform Chong Guan's research assistant about the meeting.

Rinkoo, please bring a draft version of booklet layout.

See you tomorrow.

Best,

Tansen

HC

**From:** Nilanjana Sengupta [nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in]  
**Sent:** Monday, 17 October, 2011 8:51 PM  
**To:** HCTCA Raghavan  
**Subject:** Fw: Netaji booklet meeting  
**Attachments:** RJR-Indian High Commission.doc; In His Footsteps.docx; Remembering Bose in Singapore.docx; Archival Jayati.doc; A Rani on Horseback.doc; TOC NETAJI IN SINGAPORE.doc

Dear High Commissioner Raghavan,

This is for your information please.

Best regards,  
Nilanjana Sengupta  
Visiting Research Fellow  
ISEAS, Singapore



----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** Nilanjana Sengupta <nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in>  
**To:** Tansen Sen <tansen@iseas.edu.sg>; "ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com"  
<ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com>; Jayati Bhattacharya <jayati@iseas.edu.sg>; Geoffrey Wade  
<gwade@iseas.edu.sg>; Lu Caixia <lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg>; Joyce Iris Zaide <jzaide@iseas.edu.sg>; rinkoo  
iseas <rinkoo@iseas.edu.sg>  
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**Subject:** Re: Netaji booklet meeting

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Cheers!

Nilanjana

**From:** Tansen Sen <tansen@iseas.edu.sg>  
**To:** nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in; ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com; Jayati Bhattacharya  
<jayati@iseas.edu.sg>; Geoffrey Wade <gwade@iseas.edu.sg>; Lu Caixia <lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg>; Joyce  
Iris Zaide <jzaide@iseas.edu.sg>  
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Rinkoo, please bring a draft version of booklet layout.

See you tomorrow.

Best,

Tansen

## The Rani of Jhansi Regiment

Singapore was electrified when Subhas Chandra Bose arrived first by German, then Japanese submarine in the summer of 1943. On 4 July he issued his stunning summons before a packed audience to all Indians in Southeast Asia to rise and join the struggle to free India from the bonds of British rule. His reputation for revolutionary political acts in India and his total dedication to the cause of liberating India had preceded him. Those who heard his sonorous call not only in Singapore but in Malaya and Burma as well were electrified and responded in the hundreds, then thousands. His appeal drew soldiers of the Indian National Army and civilians as well, all feeling the magic of his charisma and responding without hesitation.

The Indian National Army, though founded initially by a young Japanese major, Iwaichi Fujiwara, in cooperation with Mohan Singh of the British Indian Army, had languished when Mohan Singh encountered difficulty dealing with the Japanese occupiers after Fujiwara was posted elsewhere.

Netaji's battle cry was "Chalo Delhi!" and his stentorian voice reverberated with the words, "If you will always follow me in life as well as in death, then I will lead you on the road to victory and freedom."<sup>1</sup> Officers and men of the Indian National Army pledged their loyalty to Netaji and formed the nucleus of burgeoning numbers of the INA.

But Netaji had something more in mind for the female half the population. At public meetings 6 and 9 July he revealed his pet project when he called on all Indian

women to rise and "complete the work the Great Rani undertook in 1857."<sup>2</sup> In invoking the name of the legendary Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi for his women's Regiment he evoked many cultural themes and memories and reincarnated the historic Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. There was no way, he felt, that freedom could be won by only half the population. His appeal met an instantaneous reception in the hearts and minds of young women as they responded to volunteer not only themselves but also, with the well-to-do, even their gold jewelry.

The first woman to answer Netaji's call was Dr. Swaminadhan--coincidentally also named Lakshmi--a young medical doctor who had come to Singapore in 1940. The daughter of a prominent English-educated Madras barrister, she was already a nationalist and had heard Netaji's broadcasts from Tokyo soon after his arrival in Southeast Asia. After she heard him in Singapore she met with two prominent community leaders and together they devised a surprise for Netaji. She managed to round up twenty women to create a guard of honor for the 12 July parade.

That morning Netaji and the Indian residents of Singapore saw a remarkable sight: a women's guard of honor in white saris presenting arms to Netaji. He was thrilled. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment he was certain would inspire Indians everywhere, and he envisioned the RJR marching in the vanguard of the INA as they crossed the Burma border onto Indian soil.

Dr. Lakshmi was then called to Netaji's office, where she listened intently as explained his goals, his opposition to the caste system and his aspirations for a multi-racial, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious India. He asked her if she would be willing to take command of the RJR and then if she needed time to consider. She did not need time,

as her decision was already made. Totally energized, she launched into action the next day, provided with a staff car, office, and funds to begin recruitment.

Training began, with INA instructors and rifles in some cases captured by Japanese forces. Lakshmi was incensed when General Renya Mutaguchi, from a culture where women had no place in military tradition, asked her if women of the Regiment could actually fight. "Of course! What is required is training and discipline. We have both," she replied with spirit.<sup>3</sup> Lakshmi then spent several weeks speaking at rallies in Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh, visiting reluctant well-do-do parents to convince them to allow their protected daughters to join the struggle. In Kuala Lumpur she recruited Janaki Davar and a sister, and in Ipoh she found Rasammah and Ponammah Navarednam and others. Most of the officer corps of the RJR were drawn from this group of well-educated young women from Singapore, Malaya, and Burma. Lakshmi remarks of them, "There were quite a number of young women from comfortable homes, who in normal times would not have had any purpose in life and would have lived in refined and placid domesticity...Now they had a chance not only to escape monotony, but ...to live with a purpose and, if necessary, to die for a cause." Lakshmi explains.<sup>4</sup>

The seeming anomaly was that dozens, then hundreds of teen-age girls from the rubber plantations of Malaya and Burma also volunteered, girls who though they had never seen India, nevertheless eagerly gave their lives and perhaps deaths to Netaji and the RJR. Life on the rubber estates, it may be noted, was arduous, and moreover these young women identified neither with the foreign rulers nor with the indigenous populace. With Netaji's added multi-faceted appeal, then, they gained a sense of identity as Indians, and moreover Indians with the goal of liberating India. For all these women, the highly

educated and the less educated, youth was a time for idealism and adventure, and they embraced the opportunity in large numbers, perhaps as many as a thousand.

When Janaki Davar heard Netaji speak at a rally in Kuala Lumpur, she hastened to the podium and was the first to remove her gold earrings and place them at his feet, and others soon followed suit. At home she worried that her mother would notice that she was without her jewelry, but her father defended her against her mother's wrath, and Janaki persuaded her parents to invite Lakshmi to tea. Janaki rose to second in command of the RJR and played a crucial role in the training of troops and in the retreat.

Rasammah Navarednam, who signed up in Ipoh with two sisters, explains her motivation. "We were already psychologically and emotionally and intellectually prepared. You had the desire to be part of this great movement for freedom of one's country...."I wanted to die for India."<sup>5</sup>

Training of the RJR was rigorous and grueling. Military drill and weapons training were part of a daily regimen that began at 6 a.m. Weapons included rifles, hand grenades, bren guns, tommy guns, pistols, mortars, anti-aircraft guns and bayonets. In the afternoon INA officers gave lectures on military history. Route marches at night carrying backpacks were part of the curriculum. In the evening the girls organized variety shows and plays, including one written and produced by Lakshmi, titled "Freedom of Death."

In December, 1943 Netaji moved the headquarters of both the INA and the Free India Provisional Government to Rangoon, and he called on Lakshmi to open a camp for the RJR in Thingangyun, a Rangoon suburb. Instructors and nurses were part of the Rangoon contingent of the RJR. They traveled overland, partly on the Thai-Rangoon

Railway, the notorious "death railway." Lakshmi also established a branch of the League to recruit civilian volunteers to collect hospital supplies, and dry rations for troops. Training for the Burma Ranis intensified and included firing live ammunition.

On 30 March, 1944 the passing out parade of RJR officers was held, and the eight officers who had passed the INA officers' test were commissioned, making the RJR officially part of the INA. In April 1944 the first unit of the RJR moved six hundred miles north to the new headquarters of both the INA and Free India Provisional Government at Maymyo. On 15 April Lakshmi left for Rangoon with two other officers and six other ranks by truck convoy, sleeping in trucks at villages en route.

On the evening of 3 May, the RJR barracks was bombed and reduced to rubble. The women had heard the bombers and rushed out to their air raid shelter, enabling all to survive. The Enfield rifles were too heavy for slightly built Tamil girls and were by this time replaced by lighter Canadian or Dutch rifles captured by the Japanese in Indonesia.

The major part of the history of the RJR occurred between March 1944 and August, 1945, when the war ended. By this time and even earlier the INA and Japanese troops were on the defensive, unable to push back British Indian troops who had air cover and superior supply lines. Heavy INA casualties coming into hospitals from the front occupied nurses and even troops of the RJR. Added to these logistic problems was the weather factor, when monsoon rains rendered the jungles nearly impassable and infested with leeches and snakes.

Lakshmi and others were eager to join their INA brothers on the front lines, and with four others she appealed to Netaji with a petition signed in their own blood. By this time, however, the retreat south from Maymyo had begun.

When Netaji announced the retreat to the RJR, many made agonized protests. "No, I don't want to go back. I want to fight for India," Janaki said to Netaji. Retreat, however, was unavoidable. Janaki commanded RJR troops on a twenty-six day epic march through the jungles of Burma and Thailand, initially on a goods train, but when it was bombed, slogging through the mud and jungles on foot. They carried heavy backpacks and often went without food. "Going is heavy, we are night birds," Janaki recorded in her diary. "There are plenty of guerrilla troops in the area and we must be prepared to fight."<sup>6</sup>

Netaji accompanied the five hundred girls on the long march, and Janaki felt she had to take care of him, as he was heedless of his own welfare and health. During the train portion of the march two girls were killed when the train was attacked, the only fatalities suffered by the RJR.

Rather than join the march back, Lakshmi told Netaji she preferred to go where she could be of service, and her story continues at a hospital in Kalaw and other points for several more months in Burma. At one point when she and two others were captured by Japanese forces and tied to a tree, she expected to be executed. Instead, she was saved when a Japanese officer recognized her from a photograph in a magazine and ordered her released. She survived to continue her medical practice and to work for the welfare of veterans and women in Kanpur, India. In 2002 she ran on the CPIM ticket for president of India, not with the expectation of winning but to ensure that Indians never forget the contribution of the INA and RJR to independent India. She continues to stress passionately that the Rani of Jhansi Regiment fought not only to liberate India from foreign rule but also to free women from subjugation to men.

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In Netaji's revolutionary summons to battle to all Indian women in Southeast Asia he encapsulated many echoes and cultural elements: reverence for the Cosmic Mother and Bharat Mata, belief in the cosmic female power of Shakti, faith in the plethora of mother goddesses, the appeal of the symbol of martyrdom in the shedding of blood, and the agency of gender.

The fact that rumors of Netaji's survival as a sunnyasi somewhere in Asia abound and that India will not allow the Netaji legend to die is a recognition that what he, the INA and the Rani of Jhansi Regiment fought for is still vitally relevant for India today. This legacy stands as a model of equality and harmony for Indian democracy.

Joyce Lebra

Boulder, Colorado

## NOTES

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## In His Footsteps

### Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Singapore

#### Krishna Bose

Singapore has a prominent role in India's last War of Independence. During the Second World War Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose established the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) in Singapore and gave his stirring call 'Chalo Delhi' to the Indian National Army. The I.N.A. or Azad Hind Fauj began its march towards India determined to liberate it from British rule. Netaji had arrived in Singapore on 2 July 1943 to a tumultuous welcome. The song 'Subhasji, Subhasji' that greeted him proclaimed to the world that the light of Asia had arrived to liberate India and bearing hope of the birth of a new Asia.

My first visit to Singapore was in November 1979. It was a different Singapore by that time. But the history of India's freedom struggle still seemed to be strewn all over Singapore. In Boston there is a 'Freedom Trail' marked in red which visitors follow to see the landmarks of the American War of Independence. On that visit to Singapore my husband Sisir Kumar Bose and I followed an invisible Freedom Trail, which took us to all the historic sites connected with the memory of the great freedom fighter. It was like leafing through a history book.

Sidhatmanandaji, the Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram told us: "You must begin with the Mission of Singapore." He did not mean the one in which we were sitting with him. We were staying at their guest house under the affectionate care of Swamiji. This was a new building. The old Ramakrishna Mission building still existed with its Puja Room and Lecture Hall, which Netaji had frequently visited. On our arrival at the old ashram Sthitinandaji took charge and showed us around.

First to the Puja Room. It was still in use. The smell of flowers and 'dhup' (incense) gave me an eerie feeling. I had heard so much about Netaji's late-night visits to this room from S.A. Ayer and Abid Hasan. Both said he looked remarkably serene and calm when he emerged from his meditations.

Ayer told us that Netaji was not a man of religion in the ordinary sense of the term. But he had a deep spiritual faith. It is this faith that sustained him in crises.

Everyone knew he carried a small Gita and a rosary of 'Rudraksha' with him. But nobody ever saw a public demonstration of any rites by him. Faced with a crisis in the war situation he would simply go to the Puja Room, take off his uniform, put on a silk dhoti and sit down in meditation. When he emerged he passed on a healing touch to Ayer, Abid and others. They too were sometimes under great stress.

One fine morning in Singapore we stood before a closed gate on Meyer Road. We could see the lawn and an impressive two-storey building beyond the gate. My guides were hesitating whether to go in without permission. Impatient at their hesitation I just pushed the gate and marched in amid a chorus of protests from behind—take care, there may be dogs inside. The lawn was not very well kept. Thorny grass caught my sari. Netaji used to play badminton here with his colleagues or his personal doctor Raju. There was a stone table with stone chairs around. I visualized Netaji tired after a game resting there with a cup of tea.

I had focused my camera for a shot of the house when suddenly the house came alive. There was laughter and the sound of footsteps. The front door opened with a bang and a Chinese couple and two children came straight into my camera's view. I told them that a relative lived in this house long ago and asked if we could just look around. The gentleman recovered from his initial surprise and said "oh yes, go ahead." The family got into a car and drove out. Silence gripped the house again.

In this house Netaji resided as the Head of the Provisional Government of Free India. During the night of 19-20 October 1943 he wrote the Proclamation of that Government. S.A. Ayer has recounted that historic night. Netaji sipped black coffee and continued to write in long hand. Abid Hasan and N.G. Swami took turns to bring the pages to Ayer who went on typing. At the break of dawn the proclamation was ready.

The next day Netaji gave him the full list of signatories to the document. Netaji had a keen sense of humour and told them that all the signatories to the proclamation of Irish Independence were later shot dead. "Who knows what destiny has in store for us," he said and burst into laughter.

Our Freedom Trail led us next to the Cathay Cinema Hall. On 21 October 1943 Netaji read out the proclamation to a packed hall there—"In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and to strike for India's freedom". He was overwhelmed with emotion when he took the oath to lead the struggle for freedom till the last breath of his life.

Earlier in the year, on 4 July, the Cathay Hall had witnessed another historic meeting. The veteran freedom fighter Rashbehari Bose had handed over to Netaji the leadership of the Azad Hind Movement. Netaji accepted the honour and the responsibility in a stirring speech in Hindustani. He said the day India won freedom it would be for the people of India to decide what kind of government they wanted and who would lead them. For him personally, the only reward would be the liberation of his motherland.

The next day, 5 July, he stood at the Padang and took the salute of the Indian National Army. Standing on the steps of the Municipal Building he declared: "Today

is the proudest day of my life. Today it has pleased Providence to give me the unique privilege and honour of announcing to the whole world that India's Army of Liberation has come into being." On 6 July Japan's General Tojo stood by him and witnessed the military parade. Netaji addressed a huge public gathering on 9 July where he gave the call to all expatriate Indians in South-East Asia for Total Mobilization. The slogan was: "Total Mobilization for a Total War." The civil population responded with great enthusiasm.

The day we visited the Farrar Park of Singapore we actually saw the cradle of the Azad Hind Movement. In February 1942 it was here that Major Fujiwara of the Japanese Army took the surrender of 45,000 British-Indian Army soldiers from their British commanding officer. In an unusual speech, Fujiwara declared that the soldiers would not be treated as prisoners of war; they could fight for their motherland's liberation from colonial rule. The first I.N.A., however, did not last long. It was Netaji's arrival a year later that had an electrifying effect on the army as well as the civil population and a glorious chapter of India's freedom struggle unfolded in war-torn Singapore.

The other great achievement of Netaji in Singapore was the formation of the women's wing of the army, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Netaji had envisaged it during his 93-day submarine journey from Europe to East Asia. He put it into shape under the leadership of Lakshmi Swaminathan Sahgal, Janaki Athinahappan and others soon after his arrival in Singapore. We were shown a two-storey house surrounded by a high wall where the first 300 recruits were housed and trained. The women of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment subsequently proved their courage and fortitude in difficult times.

Our Singaporean friends took us to the sea-shore, pointed to an empty space and said: "Here stood the Martyrs' Memorial." It was Netaji's wish to erect a memorial to the unknown soldiers of the Indian National Army. He chose a place by the seaside and laid the foundation in July 1945. By the first week of September Colonel Cyril John Stracey of the I.N.A. built the Memorial there. On his arrival in Singapore, the first thing that Mountbatten did was to dynamite this Memorial. A very shocking act indeed; professional militaries normally do not show disrespect to enemy dead. But Mountbatten wished to humiliate the Indian patriots who had served in the Azad Hind Movement.

When the Memorial was blown up the I.N.A. soldiers and civilians who had gathered there were overwhelmed with grief. A soldier distraught with grief shouted: "Mountbatten, you did this to us today, one day you will be blown up like that." Many I.N.A. officers recalled this incident when three decades later Mountbatten was assassinated in a bomb blast by Irish insurgents.

The friendly government of Singapore built a small memorial at the spot later. Many visitors from India go and pay their respects there.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had arrived in Singapore on 2 July 1943. He left his Meyer Road residence for the last time on 16 August 1945. We retraced our steps on the Freedom Trail to Meyer Road, where he spent the last few days of his eventful sojourn in Singapore. Netaji was in Seremban when news reached him of the imminent surrender of Japan. Atom bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August. News also reached him that the Soviet Union had joined the war against Japan.

He drove back to Singapore and reached his Meyer Road home in the evening. Ayer accompanied him. In another car, Major Alagappan, Colonel Enayet Kiani and others followed. General Mohammad Zaman Kiani and Colonel Habibur Rahman joined them at the Cabinet meeting on the first floor southern verandah. Raghavan, Thivy and Swami arrived from Malaysia. From the night of 12 August to the early morning of 16 August cabinet was in session continuously. There were many important decisions to be taken.

Netaji's greatest concern was the safety of the women of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. He was also worried about the future of the young I.N.A. cadets who were in the Military Academy of Tokyo. The boys would be stranded there, he feared. But for the Cabinet the most difficult decision was planning the next move of Netaji. Netaji himself wished to stay back in Singapore and surrender there with his army. But his colleagues thought that would be much too risky; the vengeful British would not spare Netaji's life. There was some discussion that he might go underground in Thailand and emerge later at a suitable time. But no final decision could be reached.

The Cabinet adjourned for some time on the evening of 14 August. Netaji went to see a drama performance by the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, on the life of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, the heroine of the 1857 Revolt. The packed hall burst into applause when Netaji arrived. At the end of the performance all present sang the national anthem.

Japan formally surrendered on 15 August. In the morning, in the middle of the Cabinet meeting, Colonel Stracey arrived with the designs of the Martyrs' Memorial. Netaji approved one of the designs and enquired if the memorial could be erected before the Anglo-American forces arrived. "Certainly, Sir" Colonel Stracey replied and left after a smart salute. The others looked at Stracey with wonder mixed with disbelief.

During the deliberations on that day and the following night it was decided that Netaji would leave Singapore the next morning.

Netaji left Singapore early in the morning of 16 August 1945 for what he himself described as "an adventure into the unknown." As his plane took off the curtain came down on the saga of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Singapore.

## REMEMBERING BOSE IN SINGAPORE

Kwa Chong Guan

On 15 July 1995 Mr S Dhanabalan, the Member of Parliament for Toa Payoh GRC unveiled a plaque at the Esplanade Park marking the site where an older World War II memorial erected by the Indian National Army once stood. The plaque reads:

"In the final months of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, a memorial dedicated to the 'Unknown warrior' of the Indian National Army (INA) was constructed at this site.

The local INA was formed in 1942 with Japanese support. It sought to liberate India from the British and consisted mainly of prisoners-of-war from the British Indian Army. Subhas Chandra Bose, who led the INA from 1943 onwards, laid a foundation stone at the monument in July 1945. the Urdu words inscribed on the Monument read: ITTEFAQ (Unity), ITMAD (Faith) and KURBANI (Sacrifice).

When the British returned to Singapore, they demolished the memorial barely two months after its installation."

### Official Rememberings of Bose

This marking of the site of the World War II INA memorial by the National Heritage Board was part of a wider project that marked eleven World War II sites in Singapore. Other locations marked included the beaches at Kranji on the north west coast of Singapore where Japanese forces landed, sites of major battles at Bukit Panjang and on Kent Ridge and also the places in the city were the Japanese gathered the male Chinese population for screening for anti-Japanese activities.

This marking of key World War II sites in 1995 continued a longer programme of commemorating World War II as a major turning point of Singapore's historical development. In 1992 the old National Museum (which I was then the Director of) organized a major exhibition marking the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Japanese invasion of Malaya and Singapore. Concurrent exhibitions were organized by the Singapore Armed Forces at their old Beach Road Camp, home of the Singapore Volunteers' Corps, commemorating the contribution of the volunteers to the defence of Singapore; and the first public opening by the Singapore Heritage Society of the old Ford factory on Bukit Timah Road where General A E Percival surrendered to General Yamashita.

Percival's surrender to Yamashita was a traumatic event for the residents of Singapore who believed in the invincibility of the island fortress. The Japanese victory inaugurated three years and six months of deprivation and hardship under Japanese Occupation. The British returned to a changed Singapore and Malaya in 1945. Their World War II

planning for constitutional change for resumption of colonial rule was challenged by locals demanding self-government and eventual independence as was happening in India.

The National Heritage Board, formed in 1993, decided to continue this commemoration of World War II as a turning point of Singapore history by marking a series of key world War II sites on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Japanese Occupation. The remembering of the Indian National Army based in Singapore under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose is part of this embedding of World War II in Singapore's social memories of its historical development.

There is however a deeper category of reflections about Singapore's place in Asia's history embedded in this remembering of World War II in Singapore. It is expressed in the World War II Interpretative Centre *Reflections on Bukit Chandu* established by the National Archives of Singapore and opened on the sixtieth anniversary of the fall of Singapore on 15 February 2002. The centre provides an overview of the defence and fall of Singapore, 1940-1942 and more critically, a tribute to the sacrifice of the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions of the Malay Regiment in the final battle for Singapore. The underlying narrative is about the shared histories of Malaya and Singapore symbolised in the heroism of the Malay Battalions raised to defend the Malay states, but when assigned to defend Singapore, were prepared to fight to almost the last man defending a British colony.

Bose and the INA he led is remembered at this level of deeper reflections about Singapore's shared histories with the region in a 2003 National Archives exhibition on *Chalo Delhi; The Historical Journey of the Indian National Army* organized with the support of the Indian National Archives. The exhibition outlined the British India background to the nationalist struggles in India and militant strategy challenging M K Ghandi's more pacifist approach to the nationalist struggle for independence. Subsequent sections of the exhibition traced the establishment of the second INA in Singapore under Bose, and also the establishment of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. A major part of the exhibition traced the INA's campaign to go "Onward to India." *Chalo Delhi*, as its slogan proclaimed. The underlying intent of the exhibition was as the National Archives of Singapore states, to show "the historical journey of the INA and its role in India's struggle for freedom. The INA episode demonstrates the common cause that was forged in the 1940's between the nationalists in India and their compatriots in Singapore."

This attempt to document Singapore's shared histories with Asia is also the underlying theme of the preservation and restoration of a villa formerly owned by the rubber magnate Teo Eng Hock which he offered to Sun Yat Sen in 1906 for his stay during this seven visits to Singapore to raise support and funds for his revolutionary activities. A 1997 restoration of the villa included a series of exhibits which documents the contributions of the Chinese community in Singapore to Sun's revolutionary movement, and in a way, helped make the 1911 Revolution possible.

## Social Memories of Netaji

These official and public rememberings of Subhas Chandra Bose's time in Singapore is derived in part from a more extensive network of social memories of an older generation of Indians who personally saw and heard Bose or Netaji as they named him, and were then drawn to support the Indian Independence League and the INA he lead. The social memories of this older generation of Indians resident in Singapore were first captured in an oral history project undertaken by the Oral History Centre in the 1980's. The Centre was established in 1979 under the aegis of the National Archives to interview people who had personally witnessed or participated in the key events or institutions that define Singapore history, especially of events for which there is scant and fragmentary documentary records. Documenting the Japanese Occupation through the social memories of those who lived through it became a major project of the Oral History Centre. The several hundred hours of interviews with scores of interviews of not only locals, but also Allied prisoners-of-war and Japanese officials and military commanders where we could reach out to them now constitutes a substantive archival record of the Occupation. The information in these interviews enabled the Archives to mount a successful exhibition on the Japanese Occupation of Singapore in 1985 and in 2006 install a permanent exhibition of the Occupation in the old Ford Factory.

A pervasive theme in almost all the interviews with Indians was the emotional impact hearing and meeting Netaji had on them. Forty years on their memories of Netaji are still vivid. Here, for example, are the memories of Narayana Karuppiah who was then 17 years old, remember Netaji's rally at the Padang:

"...it was a grand meeting. Most of the Indians were at the Padang. And while he was addressing us, there was a heavy rain. And some people brought an umbrella to put on his head. Immediately he smacked and threw off the umbrella. It was also raining, he was standing in the rain. And the people also were in the rain. They did not move even an inch. And we were there until he completed his speech. It was a really long speech, if I am not mistaken, two or three hour speech. It was really a magnetic speech."

Damodaran s/o Kesavan also remembered that :

"The whole Padang was full of people, the whole Padang. And it happened to be a very heavy rain, started heavy rain. And I very well remember, somebody held an umbrella to Netaji. So, he brushed it away and asked, 'Can you provide umbrellas for all these people?'

Oh, that meeting was over and heavy rain, we all walked back to home, from Padang right up to Nelson Road we walked."

Joginder Singh was 24 when he heard Netaji, recalled that:

"...when Subhas Chandra Bose spoke, women would simply remove their gold jewellery and threw [them] at his feet. That was their contribution toward his war effort. He was a very impressive speaker, very fiery and he held the crowd in his control, nobody moved until he finished speaking."

These oral history interviews captures the drama of a personal experience of Bose and makes for a more personal understanding and remembering of Bose in Singapore than is contained in the fragmentary documentary sources.

#### Academic Reconstructions of how to remember Bose

Interacting and shaping the public and official remembering of Bose and the social memories of those who personally experienced him are the academic reconstructions of how Bose should be remembered on the basis of the extant evidence making for a verifiable and objective account of Bose. Sugata Bose's epic biography of *His Majesty's Opponent; Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle against Empire* offering of how to locate Bose in the context of Indian and British Empire history. But for Southeast Asia and Singapore, the scholarly accounting of Bose and the INA is about the tension between the INA as the rallying point of the Indian diaspora hopes for the motherland and the INA as one of the numerous volunteer and personal armies established and trained by the Japanese as part of their war strategy of building resistance groups and movements against a returning Allied offensive against Japan. Joyce C. Lebra's study of how the *Japanese Trained Armies in Southeast Asia* shaped the future of post-World War II Southeast Asia is still the benchmark study which the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies has recently reprinted.

In summary, there are then at least three different rememberings of Bose in Singapore. These are the official public rememberings of Bose in the context of Singapore's World War II history and shared histories with the region, and second, the personal social memories of a generation of Indian residents drawn to Bose and the INA as a vehicle for their hopes for India. Third would be the academic reconstruction of a precise and objective narrative of the time Bose spent in Singapore.

#### Links

Oral History interviews, alongside other archival material on Netaji and Singapore related topics can be searched at the 'access to archives online' website at [www.a2o.com.sg](http://www.a2o.com.sg).

Archival Resources concerning Singapore's war-time experience can be accessed at [www.s1942.org.sg](http://www.s1942.org.sg)

## **Reminiscences and Recollections: Archival Records on Netaji in Singapore**

JAYATI BHATTACHARYA (Ph.D)

Visiting Research Fellow

The momentous declaration of the Azad Hind government, a provisional government for free India, in 1943 by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on the foreign soil of Singapore, has gone down in history with various interpretations from scholars, nationalists and avid followers. Singapore being the central theatre of all his activities in Southeast Asia, have had the privilege of housing interesting archival records on the man who had created a unique narrative of the Indian freedom movement. Some glimpses of the man and the passion for his cause, may be seen in the available records at National Archives, Singapore, comprising of personal correspondences, official letters and documents, and photographs. The newspaper articles in English, Chinese and Tamil, also throw light on the socio-political environment, forged alliances and confronting enemies during the days of the Second World War and the Japanese occupation. There are interesting informations on the sources of funding for the Indian National Army (INA) from their publicity vehicle, *Azad Hind*. Besides, the recollections of those who lived through those times and were motivated by Netaji's personality and oratory skills, are documented in the oral history recordings in the National Archives at Singapore. They reveal fascinating stories of suppression and subjugation, motivation and struggle, identity and self-consciousness. The glimpses into the little used historical documents and records help to open new avenues of research for the better understanding of the myriad man and his beliefs.

## The Rani of Jhansi Camp, Singapore – Conversations with Datin Janaki Athi Nahappan

23-24<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, Jalan Kuantan, KL

- Nilanjana Sengupta

Janaki would ride on horseback from the RJR camp at *Helpin Road* to the army hospital at *Mingaladon*, more than 20 miles away. One day Netaji stopped her enroute and said, "Ms Davar, let me show you a few things about good horsemanship."

Datin Janaki Athi Nahappan, still fondly called Captain Janaki by her old acquaintances, lives not far away from the steel and glass spires of the PETRONAS Towers. Yet the flow of contemporary life seems to have left her house largely untouched. The Datin, at 86, lives her life surrounded by Netaji memorabilia: an old portrait of Netaji flanked by A C Chatterjee, M Z Kiani and Habibur Rahman stands with her family photographs, a glass mural of the Rani of Jhansi adorns her living room wall and the mention of the leader's name never fails to bring an unexpected rush of tears to her eyes. She browses through dusty volumes of sepia toned photographs and as she does so, images of a by-gone era unfold, an era when patriotism was palpable, awakening the Indian community to new convictions and challenges...

### **Joining the Rani of Jhansi Regiment:**

Janaki was eighteen when one afternoon in July 1943 she stole to the *Selangor Padang* to hear Subhas Chandra Bose – the same *Padang* which would come to play a significant role in the history of Malaysia and not surprisingly be rechristened the *Dataran Merdeka*. It was a large gathering of mostly Indians – plantation workers squatted on the floor in front while the women stood at a diffident distance. Netaji arrived in an open car with two outriders at the front and spoke in Hindustani which was largely incomprehensible to this young girl, though she eagerly heard the Tamil interpretation of the speech by Mr Chidambram, a senior League member. A second generation migrant to Malaya, Janaki had never seen India (and would not visit India till November 2000, when she would come to collect the *Padma Shri* conferred on her by the Indian President) and yet the country came alive in the word-pictures so deftly drawn by Bose. Emotionally moved, Janaki raised her fist to the cries of, "*Bharat mata ki jai!*" and went up to

the raised platform where Bose and Captain Lakshmi were seated. She was the first woman to respond to the INA's call and next morning's papers carried the news of her recruitment. Huge posters lined the Ampang Street or *Chetty* Street (as it was then called because of the Chettiar living there) of KL. Other women signed-up thereafter – Buddhist Josephine and Christian Stella who came from Rifle Range and would die an early death during the retreat; Anjalay who joined from a plantation in Ipoh; Ahilandam, born of a Chinese mother and an Indian father who sent her ten year old daughter away to care-givers in Madurai before being recruited as a Rani....Janaki had unwittingly pioneered a trend.

### **The Rani of Jhansi Camp in Singapore:**

Janaki and her sister Papathi moved to the Rani of Jhansi Camp on Waterloo Street in Singapore, much to the dismay of their family. They would spend the next six months here in intensive military training, preparing for the onward march to the Indo-Burma border battlefield. Camp life for these girls, brought up in relative luxury in an upper-middle class household, was not easy. They lived in *attap* sheds, slept on narrow wooden planks and had no blanket or pillow till an uncle living in Singapore brought them these little amenities. Breakfast was an unappetizing helping of *ragi* while the *langaar commanders* dished up something equally unappealing for the other meals of the day. Every afternoon the girls travelled in open trucks to the Bidadari Camp for their military training and would return only in the evening. Yet, despite the obvious discomforts, they did not take long to get accustomed to camp life – at night they would get together to sing patriotic songs and soon forged new ties of friendship.

Under orders of Netaji, no male was allowed entry into their camp – the sentries at the front-gate were female and so were the visiting doctors. Female tailors came in the initial days to fit out the girls in their new uniforms. Each camp resident received two sets – one was full length for formal occasions while the other set consisted of shorts and half sleeved shirts. The uniforms in the beginning were a plain khaki and the INA tri-color bands were added only later. Janaki recalls the initial hesitation of her camp colleagues to wear the uniform and walk the streets of Singapore for their route marches. It was Netaji's words of encouragement which helped them persist, despite the jeering crowds at Bras Basah.

While at Singapore, Janaki and the girls put up a show at the Cathay Theatre. Janaki played herself – a young girl leaving home to join the nationalist cause. As the girls sang '*Kadam kadam badeye ja*' and donations for the INA poured in, what mattered most to Janaki was the applause she received from Netaji.

#### Last days in Singapore:

Janaki returned to Singapore in August 1945 after the grueling retreat from Burma – she and her group of girls had walked for twenty six days under constant enemy fire to reach Moulmein. Netaji had been with them every step of the way, walking at the head of the column. During the last year and a half they had seen life at its worst in war-torn Rangoon. The Ranis had nursed the few surviving INA soldiers when the British bombed the army hospital at *Mingaladon*. They had travelled in a goods-train and taken refuge in leech infested paddy fields, been bullied by the communist guerrilla and spent nights huddled in way-side schools and villages during the return journey. Janaki led her platoon of girls to safety and ensured they reached their homes in Jitra, Kedah, Ipoh etc. By the time she reached Singapore, the Japanese had surrendered and Netaji was preparing to leave on yet another undisclosed journey. Janaki recalls: "He gave me a signed copy of his photograph and said, 'Don't worry, Janaki. The British will never get me - dead or alive.' That was the last time she saw him.

Till date Janaki considers Netaji as one of the greatest leaders, "who worked more than anyone else" and to whose call she would not hesitate to respond even today.

## NETAJI IN SINGAPORE

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## HC office

**From:** Nilanjana Sengupta [nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 8 September, 2011 9:16 AM  
**To:** Tansen Sen  
**Cc:** Amb. Kesavapany; Geoff Wade; Caixia Lu; Jayati Bhattacharya; TCA Raghavan; ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Short volume on Netaji

Dear All,

Just heard from Professors Sugata Bose & Joyce Lebra - they have both consented to write for us. Joyce has had an accident and is walking with a cane, so she might take a bit of extra time.

Best,  
Nilanjana

*This is not going to be a very long one!  
We also let him know about the date.*

**From:** Tansen Sen <[tansensen\\_tss@yahoo.com](mailto:tansensen_tss@yahoo.com)>  
**To:** Kwa Chong Guan <[IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg)>  
**Cc:** Amb. Kesavapany <[kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg)>; Geoff Wade <[g Wade@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:g Wade@iseas.edu.sg)>; Caixia Lu <[lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg)>; "nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in" <[nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in](mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in)>; Jayati Bhattacharya <[jayati@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:jayati@iseas.edu.sg)>; TCA Raghavan <[hc@hcisngapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisngapore.org)>; "ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com" <[ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com](mailto:ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wed, 7 September, 2011 2:23:53 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Netaji

That's great, Chong Guan. All this is of great help indeed!

I am copying this email to Ms. Nilanjana Sengupta who is editing the booklet for us and to Jayati, who is coordinating the archival material (and to a bunch of people involved in the project, including HC Raghavan).

We will be happy to pay your research assistant to help us with this.

Regards,

Tansen

*ATT CMS*

**From:** Kwa Chong Guan <[IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg)>  
**To:** 'Tansen Sen' <[tansensen\\_tss@yahoo.com](mailto:tansensen_tss@yahoo.com)>  
**Cc:** Kyaw San Wai <[isswkyaw@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:isswkyaw@ntu.edu.sg)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 7, 2011 2:09 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Netaji

Tansren,

Have checked our Archives holdings. They have compiled the materials on Bose in Singapore for an exhibition they did some years ago with the Indian National Archives. I will be drawing on that to do the essay for you. The essay will make the point that there are different rememberings of Bose: the Indian one is of the mythical hero's journey, in this case a tragic hero; then there is the Japanese remembering of Bose and in between these two I will try to situate the Singapore remembering of Bose – the recent official memory of Singapore providing a base for Bose, and readiness to do a plaque of the INA, and this is comparable to restoring the Sun Yat Sen villa and claiming Singapore and its Chinese population provided the base and funding for Sun, making possible the 1911 Revolution. Likewise, Singapore provided the base and support for Bose to raise the INA and in this context, the popular social memory of Bose among the older generation of Singapore Indians, notably S R Nathan. We have the oral history interviews of

some of the Indians who were mesmerized by Bose's oratory and moved to support the INA. Hope this argument is what you want.

For the NAS records, they are mainly photographs from the Straits Times, historic photos NAS collected and reproductions from the Indian Archives. There are also some newspaper cuttings from the Syonan Shimbun and other public documents. The archives also got some stuff from the Indian Archives. If you are looking for a Research Assistant to search the Archives holdings for stuff you want, then my Research Assistant Kyaw, who will be going through the stuff for the essay I am doing for you, can be enlisted to help you. If Nalanda Srivijaya Centre has the funds to engage him, then he is prepared to help. Kyaw is by now very familiar with our NAS procedures for getting photos out of their collection after working on the photos for our Goh Kheng Swee book.

Hope this helps.,

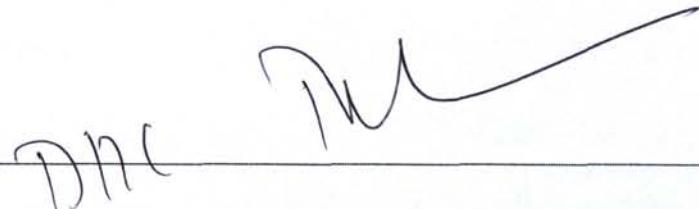
kcg

**HC Office**

**From:** Nilanjana Sengupta [nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 7 September, 2011 4:34 PM  
**To:** Tansen Sen  
**Cc:** Amb. Kesavapany; Geoff Wade; Caixia Lu; Jayati Bhattacharya; TCA Raghavan;  
**Subject:** ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com  
**Re:** Netaji

Mrs Krishna Bose has very kindly consented to write an article for the booklet on Netaji. She will try to send it to us by September end.

Thanks,  
Nilanjana



**From:** Tansen Sen <tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com>  
**To:** Kwa Chong Guan <IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg>  
**Cc:** Amb. Kesavapany <kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg>; Geoff Wade <gwade@iseas.edu.sg>; Caixia Lu <lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg>; "nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in" <nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in>; Jayati Bhattacharya <jayati@iseas.edu.sg>; TCA Raghavan <hc@hcisngapore.org>; "ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com" <ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wed, 7 September, 2011 2:23:53 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Netaji

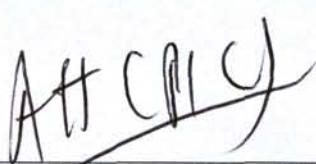
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We will be happy to pay your research assistant to help us with this.

Regards,

Tansen



**From:** Kwa Chong Guan <IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg>  
**To:** 'Tansen Sen' <tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com>  
**Cc:** Kyaw San Wai <isswkyaw@ntu.edu.sg>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 7, 2011 2:09 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Netaji

Tansen,

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Hope this helps.,

kcg

## HC Office

**From:** Jayati Bhattacharya [jayati@iseas.edu.sg]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 7 September, 2011 5:07 PM  
**To:** tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com  
**Cc:** Geoffrey Wade; hc@hcisingapore.org; IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg; Kesavapany; Lu Caixia; nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in; ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Re: Netaji  
**Importance:** High

Dear Tansen,  
This is indeed good news. We'll surely have a substantial amount of material to work with.

Thanks and regards,  
Jayati  
JAYATI BHATTACHARYA (Ph.D)  
Visiting Research Fellow  
*Netanda-Sriwijaya Centre*  
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies  
30, Heng Mui Keng Terrace  
Pasir Panjang, Singapore-119614  
H.P.# +65-92259901  
Website: [www.iseas.edu.sg/nsc](http://www.iseas.edu.sg/nsc)

*DNC* *ATT (M/C)*

-----Tansen Sen <tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com> wrote: -----

**To:** Kwa Chong Guan <IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg>  
**From:** Tansen Sen <tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com>  
**Date:** 09/07/2011 02:26PM  
**Cc:** "Amb. Kesavapany" <kesavapany@iseas.edu.sg>, Geoff Wade <gwade@iseas.edu.sg>, Caixia Lu <lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg>, "nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in" <nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in>, Jayati Bhattacharya <jayati@iseas.edu.sg>, TCA Raghavan <hc@hcisingapore.org>, "ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com" <ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Netaji

That's great, Chong Guan. All this is of great help indeed!

I am copying this email to Ms. Nilanjana Sengupta who is editing the booklet for us and to Jayati, who is coordinating the archival material (and to a bunch of people involved in the project, including HC Raghavan).

We will be happy to pay your research assistant to help us with this.

Regards,

Tansen

---

**From:** Kwa Chong Guan <IScgkwa@ntu.edu.sg>  
**To:** 'Tansen Sen' <tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com>  
**Cc:** Kyaw San Wai <isswkyaw@ntu.edu.sg>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 7, 2011 2:09 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Netaji

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the Singapore remembering of Bose – the recent official memory of Singapore providing a base for Bose, and readiness to do a plaque of the INA , and this is comparable to restoring the Sun Yat Sen villa and claiming Singapore and its Chinese population provided the base and funding for Sun, making possible the 1911 Revolution. Likewise, Singapore provided the base and support for Bose to raise the INA and in this context, the popular social memory of Bose among the older generation of Singapore Indians, notably S R Nathan. We have the oral history interviews of some of the Indians who were mesmerized by Bose's oratory and moved to support the INA. Hope this argument is what you want.

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Hope this helps.,

kcg

41  
H Cor

**From:** Tansen Sen [tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, 3 September, 2011 9:16 AM  
**To:** Wang Gungwu  
**Cc:** Amb. Kesavapany; TCA Raghavan  
**Subject:** Netaji

Dear Professor Wang,

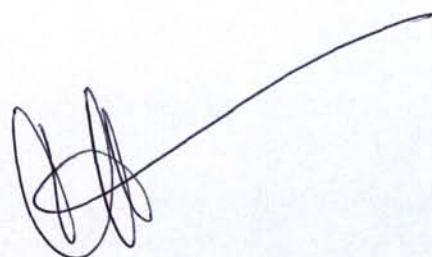
At the launch of Sugata Bose's book on Netaji, HC Ragahvan and we decided to publish a booklet (34-35 pages) on Netaji in Singapore. Other than Sugata and his mother, Krishna Bose, we are also soliciting essays from Joyce Lebra and interviewing former INA soldiers living in Singapore and Malaysia. We will also include in this booklet photographs and archival documents.

We were wondering if you could write a short piece on the Singaporean view of Netaji, putting some of the controversies in historical context. We realize that this is a sensitive issue that needs to be addressed and put into context. We think that you are the best person to do it. Something between 1500 and 2000 words would suffice. We plan to send the booklet for printing sometime around the end of this month.

We will be honored if you kindly agree to make this important contribution to the booklet.

Regards,

Tansen



Attach C10

42

**From:** Wang Gungwu [eaiwgw@nus.edu.sg]  
**Sent:** Saturday, 3 September, 2011 9:41 AM  
**To:** Tansen Sen  
**Cc:** Kesavapany; TCA Raghavan  
**Subject:** Re: Netaji

Dear Tansen

I really can't do this. I leave for Europe next week, and am also struggling to complete a manuscript for my publishers whose patience I have taxed for too long. All this will engage me fully until I leave for China in October – and I still have to prepare the three public lectures for Zhongshan University in honour of the great historian, Chen Yinke. Frankly, I am snowed under and can barely keep up with other duties.

Perhaps Tan Tai Yong, or Khoo Kay Kim in Kuala Lumpur, could manage it.

My apologies.

Warm regards

Gungwu

On 9/3/11 9:16 AM, "Tansen Sen" <[tansensen\\_tss@yahoo.com](mailto:tansensen_tss@yahoo.com)> wrote:

Dear Professor Wang,

At the launch of Sugata Bose's book on Netaji, HC Ragahvan and we decided to publish a booklet (34-35 pages) on Netaji in Singapore. Other than Sugata and his mother, Krishna Bose, we are also soliciting essays from Joyce Lebra and interviewing former INA soldiers living in Singapore and Malaysia. We will also include in this booklet photographs and archival documents.

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We will be honored if you kindly agree to make this important contribution to the booklet.

Regards,

Tansen



From: Jayati Bhattacharya [jayati@iseas.edu.sg]  
 Sent: Monday, 12 September, 2011 8:46 PM  
 To: nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in  
 Cc: Geoffrey Wade; hc@hcisingapore.org; kesavapany@starhub.ap.blackberry.net; Lu Caixia; ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com; Rinkoo Bhowmik; tansensen\_tss@yahoo.com  
 Subject: Re: TOC: Netaji in Singapore

P/C

Dear Nilanjana,

Thanks for the information. We are fortunate to have wonderful line of contributors given the short period of time. Have you given the authors a word limit? If so, how many pages approximately then would the booklet be? Please let me know how many pages do you want to keep the archival materials. I am already working on it, and we have some very interesting illustrations. It'll be easier to work on it if we know the available space (approx).

Thanks and regards,

Jayati

JAYATI BHATTACHARYA (Ph.D)

Visiting Research Fellow

Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

30, Heng Mui Keng Terrace

Pasir Panjang, Singapore-119614

H.P.# +65-92259901

Website: [www.iseas.edu.sg/nsc](http://www.iseas.edu.sg/nsc)

-----Nilanjana Sengupta <[nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in](mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in)> wrote: -----

To: Geoffrey ISEAS <[gwade@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:gwade@iseas.edu.sg)>, jayati iseas <[jayati@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:jayati@iseas.edu.sg)>, ISEAS Caixia Lu <[lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:lucaixia@iseas.edu.sg)>, "ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com" <[ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com](mailto:ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com)>, HCTCA Raghavan <[hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org)>, rinkoo iseas <[rinkoo@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:rinkoo@iseas.edu.sg)>  
 From: Nilanjana Sengupta <[nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in](mailto:nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in)>  
 Date: 09/12/2011 06:52PM  
 Cc: [kesavapany@starhub.ap.blackberry.net](mailto:kesavapany@starhub.ap.blackberry.net), ISEAS Tansen Sen <[tansensen\\_tss@yahoo.com](mailto:tansensen_tss@yahoo.com)>  
 Subject: TOC: Netaji in Singapore

Dear All,

Please find enclosed the finalised TOC for the Netaji booklet.

Thanks,  
 Nilanjana

[attachment "TOC NETAJI IN SINGAPORE.doc" removed by Jayati Bhattacharya/ISEAS/SG]

From: Nilanjana Sengupta [nilanjana125@yahoo.co.in]  
Sent: Monday, 12 September, 2011 6:50 PM  
To: Geoffrey ISEAS; jayati iseas; ISEAS Caixia Lu; ranjanasengupta2003@gmail.com;  
HCTCA Raghavan; rinkoo iseas  
Cc: kesavapany@starhub.ap.blackberry.net; ISEAS Tansen Sen  
Subject: TOC: Netaji in Singapore  
Attachments: TOC NETAJI IN SINGAPORE.doc

Dear All,  
Please find enclosed the finalised TOC for the Netaji booklet.

Thanks,  
Nilanjana

*Shc*

*ATT (P) G*

*[Signature]*

## NETAJI IN SINGAPORE

PUBLISHED BY: INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION, SINGAPORE & ISEAS, SINGAPORE

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 2011

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5. Topic not decided – Tim Harper & Christopher Bayly
6. Legacies of Bose in Singapore – Kwa Chung Guan
7. Interviews:
  - S R Nathan
  - Wang Gungwu
  - INA Veterans in Singapore
  - INA Veterans in Malaysia
8. Archival Documents & Photographs – Jayati Bhattacharya
9. ‘*His Majesty’s Opponent*’ – Launch in Singapore (photographs & speeches)
10. Selective Bibliography – Nilanjana Sengupta

## HC Office

From: TCA Raghavan [hc@hcisingapore.org]  
 Sent: Thursday, 1 September, 2011 6:16 PM  
 To: 'Bose, Sugata'  
 Subject: RE: Netaji

Dear Sugata,

Thank you for the most encouraging reply. I will get back to you after we have worked out details here.

Raghavan

TCA Raghavan  
 High Commissioner of India to Singapore  
 High Commission of India  
 31 Grange Road  
 Singapore - 239702  
 Telephone: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)  
 Fax: +65-67378696/67326909  
 E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)

SLC  
 JESWED.  
 1/9/11

[CONFIDENTIALITY: This message (including any attachments) is confidential and/or privileged. It is to be used by the intended recipients only. If you have received it by mistake please notify the sender by return e-mail and delete this message from your system. Any unauthorized use or dissemination of this message may be an offence.] -----  
 Original Message-----

From: Bose, Sugata [<mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu>]  
 Sent: Thursday, 1 September, 2011 6:13 AM  
 To: HC Office  
 Subject: RE: Netaji

Dear Raghavan,

The NRB archives contain a very large number of photographs of Netaji in Singapore. A selection, including a few that are printed in His Majesty's Opponent, can certainly be made available for the booklet you are planning for publication with due credit to NRB. How may would you want? Also, the film clips can certainly be put on a CD, again courtesy NRB. In addition to what was shown at the book launch, there is footage of Netaji arriving in Singapore on 2 July and speaking at Cathay Theater in Hindustani on 4 July. It was wonderful to see you and Ranjana in both Singapore and Dhaka.

Warm regards,

Sugata

Sugata Bose  
 Gardiner Professor of History  
 Harvard University  
 1730 Cambridge Street Room S436  
 Cambridge, MA 02138  
 Tel: 617-3847683 Fax: 617-4960621  
 Read more about this book:  
[www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674047549](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674047549)

From: HC Office [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org]  
 Sent: Wednesday, August 31, 2011 12:29 AM  
 To: Bose, Sugata  
 Cc: Bose, Sugata  
 Subject: Netaji

Dear Sugata,

MD/HC  
 AAC (RJD)

As you are aware, the Institute of South east Asian Studies (Nalanda Sriwijaya Centre) and the High Commission have been thinking of bringing about a booklet on Netaji's connection with Singapore. The idea crystallised in fact during the release of your book by President S. R. Nathan. I wonder whether you would have in the Netaji Research Bureau Collections photographs which would highlight Netaji-Singapore connection. Even if there are a few of them it would animate this booklet. Secondly, I wonder whether it would be possible to include, as part of the booklet, in a CD the wonderful evocative film clips which were shown during your book release. Finally, once the format of the book is decided I thought of imposing on you further by asking you to write a brief article.

The booklet itself would be of a modest size and we do not anticipate it to be more than 30 pages or so in all which would include the speeches made during the book release and also photos of the occasion. It would serve as a good memory of the book launch itself but will also become a record of Netaji's association with Singapore in a form which is accessible to the general public.

Warm regards  
Raghavan

---

TCA Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore

High Commission of India  
31 Grange Road  
Singapore - 239702

Tel.: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)

Fax: +65-67378696/67326909

E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org)<mailto:[hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org)> or  
[hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)<mailto:[hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)>

[sbose@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu)<mailto:[sbose@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu)>

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Warm regards,

Sugata

Sugata Bose

Gardiner Professor of History

Harvard University

1730 Cambridge Street Room S436

Cambridge, MA 02138

Tel: 617-3847683 Fax: 617-4960621

Read more about this book:

[www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674047549](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674047549)

*H. W. d'it*

**From:** HC Office [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org]

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 31, 2011 12:29 AM

**To:** Bose, Sugata

**Cc:** Bose, Sugata

**Subject:** Netaji

Dear Sugata,

As you are aware, the Institute of South east Asian Studies (Nalanda Sriwijaya Centre) and the High Commission have been thinking of bringing about a booklet on Netaji's connection with Singapore. The idea crystallised in fact during the release of your book by President S. R. Nathan. I wonder whether you would have in the Netaji Research Bureau Collections photographs which would highlight Netaji-Singapore connection. Even if there are a few of them it would animate this booklet. Secondly, I wonder whether it would be possible to include, as part of the booklet, in a CD the wonderful evocative film clips which were shown during your book release. Finally, once the format of the book is decided I thought of imposing on you further by asking you to write a brief article.

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TCA Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore

High Commission of India  
31 Grange Road

Singapore - 239702

Tel.: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)

Fax: +65-67378696/67326909

E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org)<<mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org>> or  
[hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)<<mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org>>

[sbose@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu)<<mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu>>

AMC

SG

HC Off

From: TCA Raghavan [hc@hcisingapore.org]  
Sent: Friday, 2 September, 2011 9:52 AM  
To: 'tansen@iseas.edu.sg'; 'Kesavapany'  
Subject: FW: Netaji - booklet

Dear Tansen,

This is with regard to the Netaji booklet. My exchange of mails with Sugata is self-explanatory. I think we could be modest and look at a 30-35 page booklet with photographs and CD. Write ups could include the speech delivered by the President and by Ambassador Kesavapany at the launch function. We could also ask Sugata for a brief article. Let me know if this is how you would like to proceed and whether we can freeze content and design by end September. Any ideas who can do the CD?

Raghavan

TCA Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore  
High Commission of India  
31 Grange Road  
Singapore - 239702  
Telephone: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)  
Fax: +65-67378696/67326909  
E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)

ole  
Issued  
DHH 2/9/11  
Aff(PW)

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-----Original Message-----

From: TCA Raghavan [<mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org>]  
Sent: Thursday, 1 September, 2011 6:16 PM  
To: 'Bose, Sugata'  
Subject: RE: Netaji

Dear Sugata,

Thank you for the most encouraging reply. I will get back to you after we have worked out details here.

Raghavan

TCA Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore  
High Commission of India  
31 Grange Road  
Singapore - 239702  
Telephone: +65-62382510/18 (Off.)  
Fax: +65-67378696/67326909  
E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)

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system. Any unauthorized use or dissemination of this message may be an offence. ] -----  
 Original message-----

From: Bose, Sugata [mailto:[sbose@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu)]  
 Sent: Thursday, 1 September, 2011 6:13 AM  
 To: HC Office  
 Subject: RE: Netaji

Dear Raghavan,

The NRB archives contain a very large number of photographs of Netaji in Singapore. A selection, including a few that are printed in His Majesty's Opponent, can certainly be made available for the booklet you are planning for publication with due credit to NRB. How may would you want? Also, the film clips can certainly be put on a CD, again courtesy NRB. In addition to what was shown at the book launch, there is footage of Netaji arriving in Singapore on 2 July and speaking at Cathay Theater in Hindustani on 4 July.

It was wonderful to see you and Ranjana in both Singapore and Dhaka.

Warm regards,

Sugata

Sugata Bose

Gardiner Professor of History

Harvard University

1730 Cambridge Street Room S436

Cambridge, MA 02138

Tel: 617-3847683 Fax: 617-4960621

Read more about this book:

[www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674047549](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674047549)

From: HC Office [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org]

Sent: Wednesday, August 31, 2011 12:29 AM

To: Bose, Sugata

Cc: Bose, Sugata

Subject: Netaji

Dear Sugata,

As you are aware, the Institute of South east Asian Studies (Nalanda Sriwijaya Centre) and the High Commission have been thinking of bringing about a booklet on Netaji's connection with Singapore. The idea crystallised in fact during the release of your book by President S. R. Nathan. I wonder whether you would have in the Netaji Research Bureau Collections photographs which would highlight Netaji-Singapore connection. Even if there are a few of them it would animate this booklet. Secondly, I wonder whether it would be possible to include, as part of the booklet, in a CD the wonderful evocative film clips which were shown during your book release. Finally, once the format of the book is decided I thought of imposing on you further by asking you to write a brief article.

The booklet itself would be of a modest size and we do not anticipate it to be more than 30 pages or so in all which would include the speeches made during the book release and also photos of the occasion. It would serve as a good memory of the book launch itself but will also become a record of Netaji's association with Singapore in a form which is accessible to the general public.

Warm regards

Raghavan

TCA Raghavan  
 High Commissioner of India to Singapore

High Commission of India  
 31 Grange Road  
 Singapore - 239702

Tel.: +65 62382510/18 (Off.)

Fax: +65-67378696/67326909

E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org)<<mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org>> or  
[hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)<<mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org>>

[sbose@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu)<<mailto:sbose@fas.harvard.edu>>

From: HC Office [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org]  
Sent: Wednesday, 31 August, 2011 12:30 PM  
To: 'sbose@fas.harvard.edu'  
Cc: 'Bose, Sugata'  
Subject: Netaji

Dear Sugata,

As you are aware, the Institute of South east Asian Studies (Nalanda Sriwijaya Centre) and the High Commission have been thinking of bringing about a booklet on Netaji's connection with Singapore. The idea crystallised in fact during the release of your book by President S. R. Nathan. I wonder whether you would have in the Netaji Research Bureau Collections photographs which would highlight Netaji-Singapore connection. Even if there are a few of them it would animate this booklet. Secondly, I wonder whether it would be possible to include, as part of the booklet, in a CD the wonderful evocative film clips which were shown during your book release. Finally, once the format of the book is decided I thought of imposing on you further by asking you to write a brief article.

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Warm regards  
Raghavan

TCA Raghavan  
High Commissioner of India to Singapore

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E-mail: [hc@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hc@hcisingapore.org) or [hcoffice@hcisingapore.org](mailto:hcoffice@hcisingapore.org)

sbose@fas.harvard.edu

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*By*  
*31/8/11*

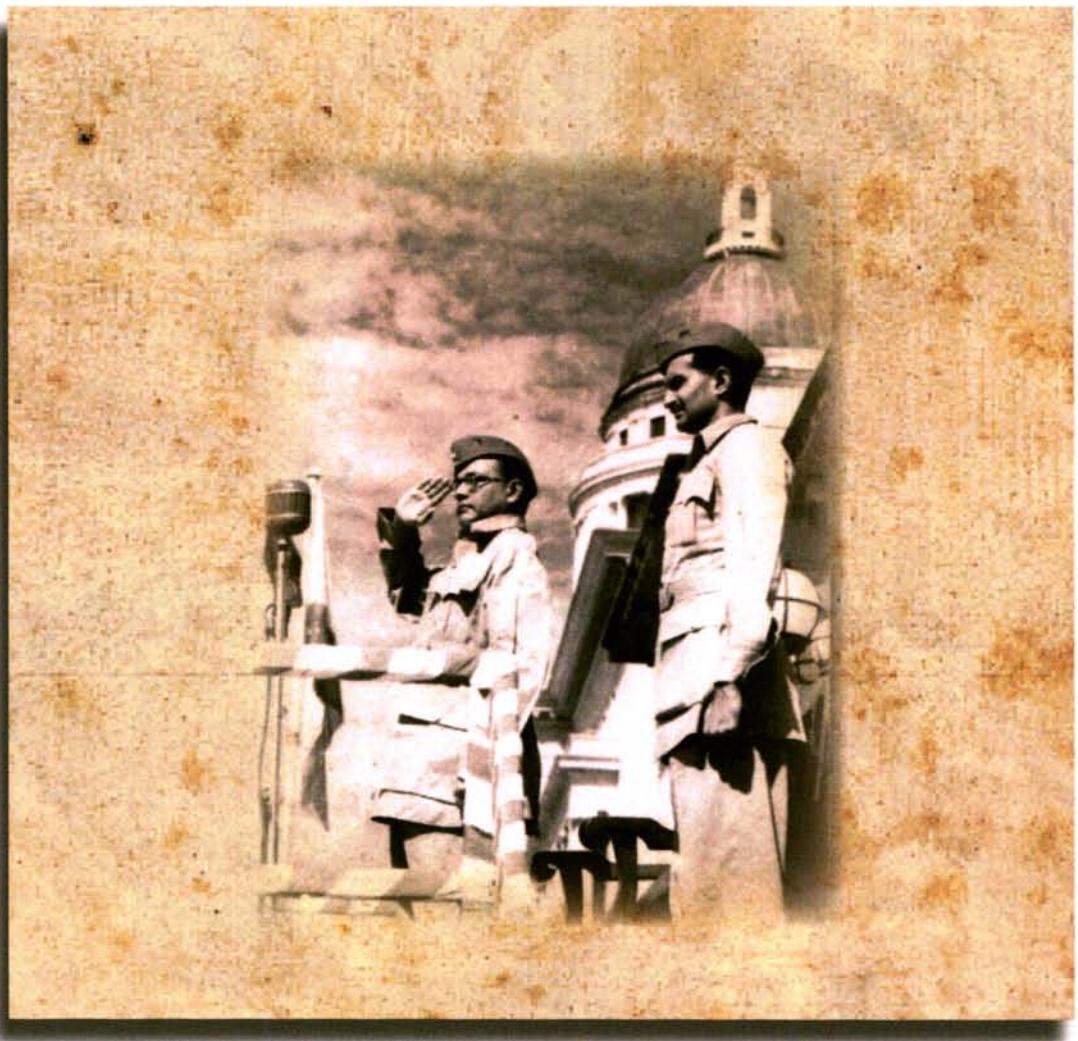
*[Signature]*  
*Att (P/C)*

# NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

# The Singapore Saga



NALANDA-SRIWIJAYA CENTRE, ISEAS  
SINGAPORE



### The Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre

at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, pursues research on historical interactions among Asian societies and civilizations. It serves as a forum for comprehensive study of the ways in which Asian polities and societies have interacted over time through religious, cultural, and economic exchanges and diasporic networks. The Centre also offers innovative strategies for examining the manifestations of hybridity, convergence and mutual learning in a globalizing Asia.



# NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

## The Singapore Saga

Selected writings, rare photographs, oral history and archival documents on Subhas Chandra Bose and Singapore's role in the struggle for India's freedom



Singapore, 1943. Netaji reviews INA troops. Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau.

*The Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies expresses its deepest gratitude to the following institutions and individuals for making this project possible:*

- The High Commission of India, Singapore
- The Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata
- The National Library Board, Singapore
- The National Archives, Singapore
- The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Library, Singapore
- Herbert A. Friedman (<http://www.psywarrior.com>)
- Harvard University Press
- Ranjana Sengupta, Joyce Iris Zaide, Aparajita Basu

Front Cover

*INA troops at the Padang, Singapore, 5 July 1943. Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau  
Photo of Netaji and newspaper clippings: Courtesy ISEAS Library*

Back Cover

*21 October 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose proclaiming the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India at Singapore's Cathay Cinema. Photo: Courtesy ISEAS Library.*

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11	<b>In Bose's life story, Singapore was an important platform</b> TCA Raghavan
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## Subhas Chandra Bose and Singapore

**GEORGE YEO**

*Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Singapore*

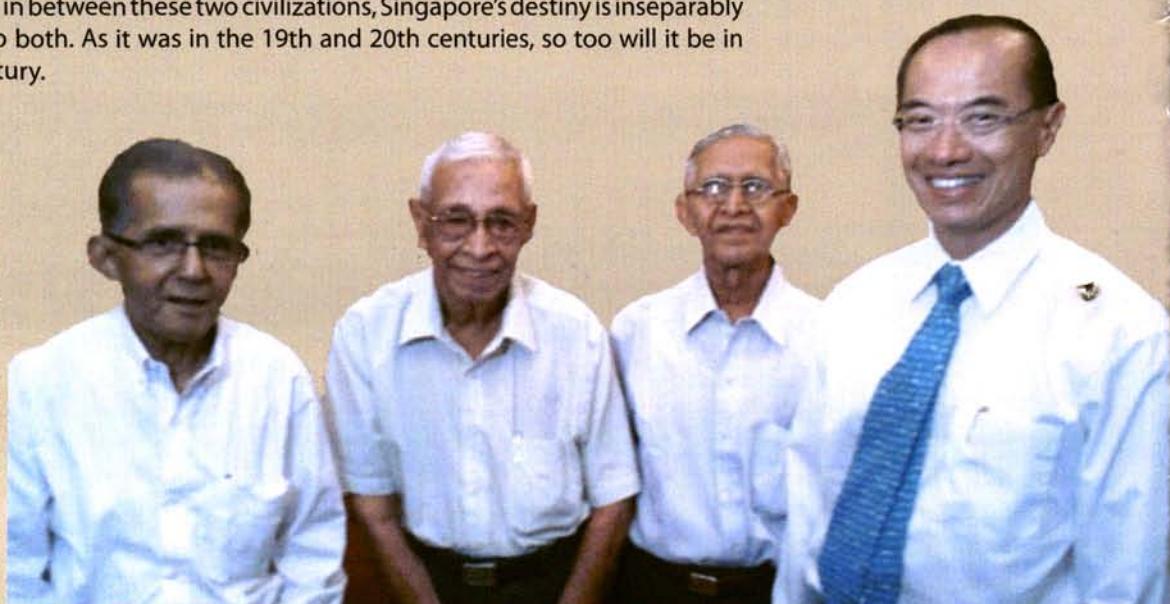
**M**any non-Indian Singaporeans are unaware of the role Singapore played in the independence struggle of India. Some, especially Chinese Singaporeans, saw Netaji as a Japanese collaborator. In a sense he was. The Japanese Army removed Mohan Singh to clear the way for Netaji's rise as the leader of the Indian National Army. (Incidentally, Mohan Singh was incarcerated in a small prison on Pulau Ubin which still stands today but is now temporarily used as a seafood restaurant.)

Netaji's role in threatening the Raj by military force was a necessary complement to Gandhi's non-violent struggle. The British knew that if they did not grant India freedom, they would eventually be forced out. Persisting in the prosecution of INA soldiers after the War would only make their position in India worse.

With the detachment of time, Netaji's role in the independence of India is increasingly acknowledged across Indian society. Singaporeans are also increasingly aware and proud of the part Singapore played in that big story. It runs strangely parallel to the part Singapore played in another big story – the 1911 Revolution in China – the Centennial of which we celebrate this year. History brought two great historical figures to Singapore, Dr Sun Yat-Sen and Subhas Chandra Bose, and Singapore became a base for their monumental exertions, one to the east and the other to our west.

This was not twice an accident. Because of its geographical and cultural position in between these two civilizations, Singapore's destiny is inseparably linked to both. As it was in the 19th and 20th centuries, so too will it be in this century.

*From left:  
INA veterans  
Bala Chandran, Kishore  
Bhattacharya and Girish  
Kothari with George Yeo  
at the launch of  
Sugata Bose's new  
biography of Netaji, His  
Majesty's Opponent.  
Photo:  
Madan Kunnavakkam*



## Bose and the linked histories of Singapore and India

K KESAVAPANY

*Director, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore*

The history of modern Singapore begins with Stamford Raffles going to Calcutta and receiving the East India Company's permission to set up a trading base on the island. However, this is only half the story. The other half begins with Subhas Chandra Bose revitalizing the Indian National Army in Singapore to fight British colonialism in India. The landings by Raffles and Bose – in 1819 and 1943 respectively – are the two most critical events in the history of Singapore before its independence in 1965. The two earlier dates tie together inextricably the histories of India and Singapore.

It was at the Padang in Singapore that Bose mesmerized and motivated Indians to join the military quest for India's independence. His marching call, "Chalo Delhi", gave meaning to their downtrodden lives and unfulfilled imaginations in colonial Singapore and Malaya. What is striking is that he managed to cut across religious, linguistic, regional and gender divisions and give his followers an inclusive sense of Indianness.

Tellingly, the Indian National Army recruited Indians outside the martial races who, the British believed, were the only capable sources of military valour. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment destroyed the final divide and gave women the confidence and capacity to fight alongside men. This was a truly revolutionary endeavour.

That Pandit Nehru laid a wreath at the site of the INA memorial during his visit to Singapore in 1946 suggests the importance of Bose and his INA in the Indian freedom struggle. It also reflects the historical linkages between Singapore and India.



# Singapore and Calcutta

TANSEN SEN

Head, Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at ISEAS

In 1826, Singapore became part of the Straits Settlements following the Anglo-Dutch Treaty signed two years earlier. In 1830, it was officially placed under the Presidency of Bengal and thus within the administration of the British East India Company. In fact, British control of the port started in 1819, when a British East India Company official named Thomas Stamford Raffles reached an agreement with the local officials to allow a British trading outpost to be established at Singapore. With the placing of the territory under the Presidency of Bengal, Calcutta (Kolkata), then the capital of British India, not only acquired administrative control over Singapore, but also became intimately linked to the Southeast Asian port through commercial and cultural activities.

On one hand, Singapore was the main transit centre for opium, cotton and other goods exported from Calcutta to China, as well as a penal settlement for Indian political prisoners and other criminals prosecuted by the Bengal government. On the other hand, Singapore and Calcutta were connected through the missionary work by followers of various faiths and movements of immigrant groups, especially those belonging to the Baghdadi Jews and the Parsi communities. David Marshall, the first chief minister of Singapore, for example, was a descendant of Jewish immigrants from Calcutta. Moreover, during the Japanese Occupation, prominent Malayans and Singaporeans such as Lim Bo Seng, Albert Foo Yin Chiew, and Tan Chin Tuan evacuated to Calcutta. With other evacuees in India, some of these people discussed the plans for post-War reconstruction of the Malayan region. As Sunanda Dutta-Ray has pointed out in his seminal work *Looking East to Look West: Lee Kuan Yew's Mission India*, Calcutta's connection to Singapore also

included the minting of Singapore dollars in the Indian city, the establishment of the first Singapore bank by the Union Bank of Calcutta, and the founding of Singapore's major English-language newspaper, *The Straits Times*, in 1845, by Catchick Moses, a Calcutta Armenian.

The highlights of Singapore's connections to Calcutta, and Bengal in general, were no doubt the visit by Rabindranath Tagore in 1927 and the establishment of the Indian National Army base in Singapore by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943. Both Tagore and Bose are regarded as heroes by Bengalis worldwide. Tagore's six-day visit to Singapore put him in contact with a key individual named Tan Yunshan, then a teacher at a local Chinese school, who later helped establish the first China studies centre at Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan. Bose's efforts in Singapore provided new impetus to India's freedom struggle.

Unlike Tagore, however, the legacy of Bose in Singapore is somewhat ambiguous, as can be discerned from George Yeo's Foreword to this volume. He correctly points out that many non-Indian Singaporeans are unaware of the role Singapore played in India's freedom movement. Indeed, while Indians in Singapore – the former British army conscripts, the indentured labourers, and other Indian immigrants who joined the Indian National Army – saw Bose as the leader of an Indian nationalist movement, the local Chinese were more concerned about the spread of Japanese imperialism. Many of them looked at Bose and the Indian National Army through the prisms of Japanese colonialism and brutality.

But, Bose himself had been critical of the means the Japanese used to confront Western imperialism. In 1937, commenting on the Japanese Occupation in China, Bose wrote, "But could not all this have been

achieved without Imperialism, without dismembering the Chinese Republic, without humiliating another proud, cultured and ancient race? No, with all our admiration for Japan, where such admiration is due, our whole heart goes to China in her hour of trial." He concluded by stating, "Standing at the threshold of a new era, let India resolve to aspire after national self-fulfillment in every direction — but not at the expense of other nations and not through the bloody path of self-aggrandisement and imperialism." Singaporeans are generally unaware of Bose's critique of Japanese imperialism.

As the Singapore minister of foreign affairs, George Yeo had discussed with his then Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee "the formation of a group to study, in a contemporary context, the heritage of Bose and the Indian National Army in Singapore." This booklet and the forthcoming monograph by the editor of this volume, Nilanjana Sengupta, entitled *A Gentleman's Word: The Legacy of Subhas Chandra Bose in Southeast Asia*, attempt to begin such examination of the heritage of Bose in Singapore.

This booklet is also part of the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre's efforts to study the interactions between Singapore and India through the examination of archival material in India and Southeast Asia. In fact, on the dusty shelves of the West Bengal State Archives there is a huge range of files and books that are essential materials for studying the crucial relationship between Singapore and Calcutta during the colonial period. They await in-depth exploration and study. There are also unexplored materials in the National Archives of Singapore that will help us more fully understand the dynamic and multi-faceted interactions between Singapore and Calcutta.



# A City and a Soldier: Netaji in Singapore

NILANJANA SENGUPTA

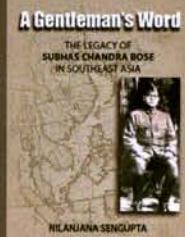
Visiting Research Fellow, ISEAS

**O**n 6 May 1943 Subhas Chandra Bose arrived by submarine at Sabang, an isolated islet off the coast of Sumatra. Plans of disembarking at the more populous Penang had to be discarded because some Japanese codes had been intercepted by the Allies. His long and arduous journey had lasted almost three months and taken Bose and his adjutant Abid Hasan, halfway across the globe, first in German and then Japanese submarines. Hasan wrote that as he stepped aboard the German U-boat, the envisaged romance of travelling by a submarine fast dissipated: Bose was allotted a bunk in an unenclosed recess in the passage and the "stench of diesel" permeated the air.<sup>1</sup> Emilie Schenkl came to Berlin to bid them goodbye. For Bose, after their long and committed relationship for the previous ten years and the recent birth of his daughter, Anita, it must have been an emotionally difficult parting.<sup>2</sup> But as their vessel moved underwater, surfacing only at night to recharge batteries, the leader put in long hours of work preparing for the Indian nationalist struggle that he was to spearhead in Southeast Asia, undeterred by physical or emotional adversities.

Almost immediately on arrival, Bose departed for Tokyo, from where was transmitted his first radio messages after a lapse of several months. These messages contributed to the sense of anticipation that preceded his eventual landing at Singapore on 2 July 1943. The drum roll of his impending arrival was heard in the newspapers of the time. Japanese-run *Syonan Times* hailed



The crew of the Japanese submarine in 1943. Abid Hasan and Bose are in the front row, extreme left. Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau.



Forthcoming book on Netaji by Nilanjana Sengupta, to be published by ISEAS

him as the "Idol of Indian Youth"<sup>3</sup> and carried double column headlines announcing his participation in the Indian Freedom Movement: "Subhas Chandra Bose coming...to take active part in Indian Independence move... announcement of arrival in Tokyo signal of victory...The Indian Independence Movement in Toa [East Asia] has the powerful support of Nippon...But it is a movement organised and carried on by the sons and daughters of India who are free citizens of Toa."<sup>4</sup> News of his radio broadcasts in English and Hindustani, to be aired on "225 metres" also received publicity. Janaki Davar, living at Rifle Range, Kuala Lumpur heard of his coming via the local bush-telegraph<sup>5</sup> while Bala A Chandran, who would join the Balak Sena, had the news read out to him by his mother from the Malayalam paper, *Kerala Bandhu*.<sup>6</sup> From this time till January 1944, when the advance headquarters of the Provisional Government were moved to Rangoon, and again for a period towards the end of the war in 1945, Singapore would remain the heartland of Bose's anti-colonial campaign.

On 4 July 1943 Bose made his first public appearance at the Cathay Theatre in Singapore and invited all his countrymen from "East Asia, to line up in one solid phalanx under one leadership and prepare for the grim fight" that lay ahead.<sup>7</sup> This was also the last time he was seen in civilian attire as he formally accepted the leadership of the Indian Independence League (IIL) from the veteran leader, Rashbehari Bose. The following day, on 5 July Subhas Chandra Bose appeared at the Singapore Padang, opposite the

**In his last note addressed to the Indians of East Asia, who had stood by him through the initial euphoria and the subsequent despondency of defeat, Netaji held out a promise: "The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal...India shall be free and before long." The words have come to personify an indomitable human spirit in the face of impossible odds.**

Municipal Building (now City Hall) to address the "Soldiers of India's Army of Liberation". Some 12,000 soldiers of the Indian National Army (INA) as well as a rapturous crowd of civilians had gathered to hear his historic speech: "Let your battle-cry be 'To Delhi! To Delhi!' How many of us will individually survive this war of freedom, I do not know. But I do know this ... our task will not end until our surviving heroes hold the victory parade on another graveyard of the British Empire – Lal Kila...of ancient Delhi."<sup>8</sup> SR Nathan, former President of Singapore, who was present on the day, recalls the slight drizzle that started midway through the speech. Netaji ("Respected leader") was not too pleased when some from the audience got restive and looked for shelter.<sup>9</sup> Soon after, on 12 July, Bose fulfilled a long cherished dream and addressed the first recruits of the all-women Rani of Jhansi Regiment (RJR).

The 5 July parade set an important precedent. In the subsequent months, Netaji's journeys criss-crossed Southeast Asia, taking him to Malaya, Burma, Indonesia, Thailand and French Indochina. Everywhere the trend was noticeably uniform: he spoke in stirring English or Hindustani, rapidly translated into Tamil for the large Tamil-speaking diaspora and the audience responded with equal fervour, committing their services and material possessions to the nationalist cause. These larger-than-life INA rallies left a trail of memories and find repeated mention in oral history records. It was a time when Indian households took pride in hoisting the tricoloured flag and in a fascinating story, *Syonan Sinbun* reports that some Indians looked upon Bose as the "Lord Krishna of the moment" who had appeared to scourge the evils of colonialism.<sup>10</sup>

As Netaji's powerful campaigns continued, the number of volunteers to the cause soared. Some 18,000 civilians<sup>10</sup> enlisted for the INA while thousands joined the IIL's branch offices in support functions. The Indian POWs who had not committed their allegiance to the INA in

1942, under the leadership of Mohan Singh, were now "swept off their feet" and took the combined strength of the INA to more than 40,000.<sup>11</sup> There were many families where the parents joined the INA and the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, while the younger ones signed up with the Balak Sena. Professor Wang Gungwu recalls his childhood acquaintances, Rasammah Bhupalan and her sister who left their home in Ipoh to enlist with the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.<sup>12</sup>

On 21 October 1943 in Singapore, Bose proclaimed the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. Yet again the Cathay Theatre was filled to capacity as Netaji and his Cabinet of ministers took the oath of allegiance. In a voice choked with emotions the leader declared, "In the name of God, I take this sacred oath – that to liberate India and the 38 crores of my countrymen, I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue this sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life."<sup>13</sup> The organizational structure of the Provisional Government included in this volume (p. 27), is taken from the writings of SA Ayer and depicts the ministries as well as IIL's territorial spread across the countries of Southeast Asia.<sup>14</sup> The Provisional Government soon received diplomatic recognition from nine states of the Axis powers – this would bequeath a constitutional legitimacy to the new government and help strengthen the INA's case at the subsequent Red Fort Trials held by the British in India.

By mid-1945, Netaji returned to Singapore after an extended period spent on the Indo-Burmese battlefield. The tides of war had turned against the Axis Powers: in Europe the Germans had been decisively defeated while in Asia the end of Japanese Occupation seemed imminent. Bose returned, leading the women of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment to safety, after a horrifying retreat through the jungles and monsoon-swollen rivers of Burma. Though the war was obviously drawing to a close, for him India's independence movement was not yet finished. On 4 July, the

anniversary of his taking over leadership of the movement, he addressed a large gathering in Singapore and on 8 July, laid the foundation stone of the INA martyr's memorial at the Singapore seafront. But with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the war came to a sudden end and on 16 August 1945, Subhas Chandra Bose left Singapore on a final journey-of-no-return with three of his close compatriots. They travelled first to Bangkok and then to Saigon. On 17 August he left Saigon aboard a Japanese Air Force bomber, accompanied by his deputy chief of staff, Habibur Rahman. They transited at the Taipei airport for refuelling. The engine of the aircraft had been giving trouble and, soon after the plane was airborne, there was a loud explosion and it tilted to the left and eventually crashed not far from the runway. Netaji, who suffered serious burn injuries while struggling out of the fateful aircraft, breathed his last on 18 August, at a hospital in Taipei: he was yet to turn 49.

In his last note addressed to the Indians of East Asia, who had stood by him through the initial euphoria and the subsequent despondency of defeat, Netaji held out a promise: "The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal...India shall be free and before long."<sup>15</sup> The words have come to personify an indomitable human spirit in the face of impossible odds. The INA movement met with apparent failure in the campaigns of 1945 and yet managed to leave a legacy for India and the Indians of Southeast Asia as they struggled to shed their colonial status. As the Japanese surrendered and the INA was disbanded, a large number of the troops were repatriated to India. The Red Fort trials of the trio – Shah Nawaz Khan, Gurubaksh Singh Dhillon and Prem Kumar Sahgal, held at Delhi in November 1945, triggered powerful public resentment which soon spread to units of the British Indian Army, ultimately leading to the subversion of Indian loyalty to this supreme tool of British hegemony in Asia: the Army could not be used to suppress the indigenous

nationalist movements which had sprung up in parts of Southeast Asia as effectively as it had been done before. Participation in the nationalist struggle invested the resident Indian community of Southeast Asia with a rare sense of dignity and fostered a mushrooming of militant trade unions, making it difficult for the returning British planters to perpetuate their control over what had once been a docile workforce. At the INA camps Indian society came together in a powerful alchemy of new ideas and political views as the partisans were exposed to not only nationalism but diverse radical schools of political thought.<sup>16</sup> The Rani of Jhansi movement proved to be a pioneering effort at drawing Indian women out of their veiled image - inspiring some of them to take up mainstream roles for causes of equality and emancipation. Subhas Chandra Bose became a role model for a new generation of Asian leaders, many of whom were inspired by his oratory skills and advocacy of militancy.

In this slim volume being published by the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, we attempt to recapture the spirit of the movement which Bose unleashed in Singapore. In his narrative, Kwa Chong Guan dwells on the different layers of memories that Bose evokes – the official, the personal and the objective reconstruction of history by academia. In Krishna Bose's delightful essay, the past and present seamlessly merge as she writes of her personal travels through Singapore, in pursuit of the invisible "Freedom Trail". Joyce Chapman Lebra, after her substantive research on the INA and the RJR, offers fascinating details on the all-women regiment that Netaji raised. We round up the essays with a brief excerpt from Sugata Bose's recent publication, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire*. The piece deftly captures the rich panoply of thought that contributes to the texture of the biography: it begins with the rationale in Bose's contentious alliance with the Japanese, describes the very symbolic handing over of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the Japanese to the Provincial Government of Azad Hind and ends on a poignant note with a radio message transmitted to Bose, conveying the news of his mother, Prabhavati Debi's death in Calcutta.



*Janaki Davar leads a Guard of Honour for Netaji.*

*Photo: Courtesy Janaki Nahappan.*

The final section puts together accessible archival material available on Bose – the oral history recordings, photographs, newspaper clippings, propaganda leaflets and letters that shed fresh light on a turbulent period which proved to be a turning point in Asia's shared history. The interviews with the veterans of the INA and Rani of Jhansi Regiment reveal a very different Singapore – it was a time of kampongs and vegetable farms in Bukit Timah, when the Azad Hind Radio was located at the Cathay building, when the INA men went for morning runs on Dunearn Road and the "Ranis" marched down Bras Basah!

This volume is further enriched by extracts of speeches by SR Nathan, former President of Singapore, and TCA Raghavan, High Commissioner of India in Singapore, at the launch of Sugata Bose's definitive biography of Subhas Chandra Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, and by the Foreword by George Yeo, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore.

Subhas Chandra Bose during his Cambridge days in England was wont to recite a slightly modified version of Kipling's verse –

"There is but one task for all-  
One life for each to give.  
What stands if freedom fall?  
Who dies if India live?"

– lines that capture perfectly the essence of the ideal by which he would lead his future life.

#### NOTES

1. Abid Hasan, "A Soldier Remembers", *The Oracle*, January 1984, Calcutta: NRB, p. 53.
2. Anita Bose, Subhas Chandra Bose's only child, was born in November 1942.
3. *Syonan Times*, 19 June 1943.
4. *Syonan Times*, 21 June 1943.
5. Interview with Janaki Athi Nahappan, Kuala Lumpur, 23 September 2011.
6. Interview with Bala A Chandran, Singapore, 15 September 2011.
7. "Chalo Delhi, 1943-45", *Netaji Collected Works, Volume 12*, Calcutta: NRB, p. 39.
8. "Chalo Delhi, 1943-45", pp. 45-48.
9. SR Nathan, *An Unexpected Journey: Path to the Presidency*, Singapore, EDM, 2011, p. 105.
10. *Syonan Sinbun*, 29 October 1943.
11. Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, pp. 246, 251.
12. Interview with Professor Wang Gungwu, Singapore, 20 September 2011.
13. "Chalo Delhi, 1943-45", p. 117.
14. SA Ayer was a journalist who became the Minister of Publicity and Propaganda with the Provisional Government. His book, *Unto Him a Witness* narrates his first-hand experiences of the time.
15. "Chalo Delhi, 1943-45", pp. 407-410.
16. Many of the veterans interviewed for this volume recall being exposed in their INA days to the writings of Bernard Shaw, Marx, Lenin and Fabian Society publications.



# His appeal cut across religious, caste and linguistic lines

**SR NATHAN**

*Former President, Republic of Singapore*

Subhas Chandra Bose was a sworn enemy of the British Raj although he could have enjoyed more than a comfortable career in the prestigious Indian Civil Service (ICS) of colonial India. He was an alumnus of Calcutta's prestigious Presidency College and of Cambridge University, who excelled in his studies. But he resigned from the ICS on principle, committed as he was to struggle against British rule in India. What he is also remembered for is the election he won to become the President of the Indian National Congress in 1939, defeating the nominee of Mahatma Gandhi.

With his arrival in Singapore in July 1943, he revitalized the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army (INA) that had been earlier formed by Captain, later General, Mohan Singh. On 4 July that year, he rose to the leadership of the Indian freedom movement based in Southeast Asia. In rallying support for his cause in Southeast Asia, he offered to those prepared to follow him "nothing but hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death", and announced to the whole world that India's army of liberation had come into being. In October that year, he proclaimed the formation of the Azad Hind, or Provisional Government of Free India, in Singapore.

What I remember of him, was when he appeared at his first public rally, organised to welcome him in Singapore in early July 1943. Being Straits-born and very much a product of the British education system, I received my first political education and an eye-opener to what the Indian struggle was about. From that speech my perspective of British rule, even in Malaya, took an opposite turn and has remained so to this day.

Bose's exemplary character did play an important role in his extraordinary appeal to the Indians in occupied Southeast Asia. His charismatic personality does not explain all of the public adulation that he aroused in Singapore and beyond. Scholars write that his presence marked the real dawn of mass anti-British politics in Malaya. People flocked to hear him, donated money, jewellery or pocket money, and took up his cause. With his inspiration, docile and subservient Indian workers rose in self-confidence and discipline to become part of his INA and saw action in the Burma/India Front. His appeal cut across religious, caste and linguistic lines so much a part of Indian society then. He brought women into the mainstream of the armed struggle against the British through the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.

Although the INA did not succeed in reaching the destination that Netaji desired – "Chalo Delhi", or "Onward to Delhi" – historians acknowledge that it contributed decisively to the Independence that India finally achieved in 1947. Singapore's role as the launching pad of his struggle and the INA's ultimately successful anti-colonial march is a fact of history that relates this country closely to India's Independence struggle.

In this book, Professor Sugata Bose describes the INA segment of Netaji's political and military journey with historical passion and literary elan. In fact, these are the defining characteristics of the book as a whole. Professor Bose, despite being a close family member of Subhas Chandra Bose, has written this book with the same scholarly detachment that he brings to bear on his work as a leading historian at Harvard. I am confident that readers of this book will enjoy the fascinating story that unfolds within its pages.



These speeches were delivered at the launch of *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire* by Sugata Bose, in Singapore on 5 July 2011. The venue of the launch overlooked the Padang where Netaji made his stirring speech on 5 July 1943. An excerpt of Sugata Bose's book appears on page 24.

# In Bose's life story, Singapore was an important platform

**TCA RAGHAVAN**

*High Commissioner of India, Singapore*

Subhas Chandra Bose, or Netaji, occupies a unique space in Indian political history.

In Subhas Chandra Bose's life story, Singapore was not just an important milestone, but also an important platform. Your presence here today, Mr President, gives our understanding of that period of our history a certain completeness and finality. It is also symbolic both of Singapore's special place in the biography and history of Subhas Chandra Bose as also of his own extraordinary personality and sense of national service.

In writing this biography, Sugata Bose has accomplished two important things. Firstly, he has filled a large gap in our knowledge of Indian politics and the national movement by adding a rigorous biography of Bose to the existing literature.

Secondly, I believe that this work will catalyze more biographies of our historical personages, and thereby animate our history. Prof Bose has therefore achieved that double milestone which all professional historians strive for: A good work of history which is also a trendsetter in historiographical terms.

Finally, may I thank the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. One day in the future, when the full history of India's Look East policy is written, I am sure that the ISEAS and the scholars and researchers who are associated with it will find a full recognition of what their scholarly efforts yielded.



**BOOK LAUNCH**

*From left:*

*Salman Khurshid, India's Law Minister; Prof Sugata Bose; SR Nathan, former President of Singapore; Ambassador K Kesavapany, ISEAS Director; and Dr TCA Raghavan, High Commissioner of India in Singapore. Photo by Joyce Iris Zaide.*

# Remembering Bose in Singapore

KWA CHONG GUAN

Chairman, National Archives Board,  
Singapore

On 15 July 1995, S Dhanabalan, the Member of Parliament for Toa Payoh GRC unveiled a plaque at the Esplanade Park, marking the site where an older World War II memorial erected by the Indian National Army once stood. The plaque reads:

In the final months of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, a memorial dedicated to the 'Unknown Warrior' of the Indian National Army (INA) was constructed at this site.

The local INA was formed in 1942 with Japanese support. It sought to liberate India from the British and consisted mainly of prisoners-of-war from the British Indian Army. Subhas Chandra Bose, who led the INA from 1943 onwards, laid a foundation stone at the monument in July 1945. The Urdu words inscribed on the Monument read: ITTEFAQ (Unity), ITMAD (Faith) and KURBANI (Sacrifice).

When the British returned to Singapore, they demolished the memorial barely two months after its installation.

## Official Remembering of Bose

This marking of the site of the World War II INA memorial by the National Heritage Board was part of a wider project that marked eleven World War II sites in Singapore. Other locations marked included the beaches at Kranji on the north-west coast of Singapore where Japanese forces landed, sites of major battles at Bukit Panjang and on Kent Ridge and also the places in the city were the Japanese gathered the male Chinese population for screening for anti-Japanese activities.

This marking of key World War II sites in 1995 continued a longer programme of commemorating World War II as a major turning point of Singapore's historical development. In 1992 the old National

Museum (of which I was then the Director) organized a major exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of the start of the Japanese invasion of Malaya and Singapore. Concurrent exhibitions were organized by the Singapore Armed Forces at their old Beach Road Camp, home of the Singapore Volunteers' Corps, commemorating the contribution of the volunteers to the defence of Singapore; and the public opening by the Singapore Heritage Society of the old Ford factory on Bukit Timah Road where General AE Percival surrendered to General Yamashita.

Bose and the INA he led were remembered at a level of deeper reflections about Singapore's shared histories with the region in a 2003 National Archives exhibition entitled *Chalo Delhi: The Historical Journey of the Indian National Army*, organized with the support of the National Archives of India. The exhibition outlined the British India background to the Indian nationalist struggles and how their militant strategy challenged MK Gandhi's more pacifist approach in the nationalist struggle for independence. Subsequent sections of the exhibition traced the establishment of the second

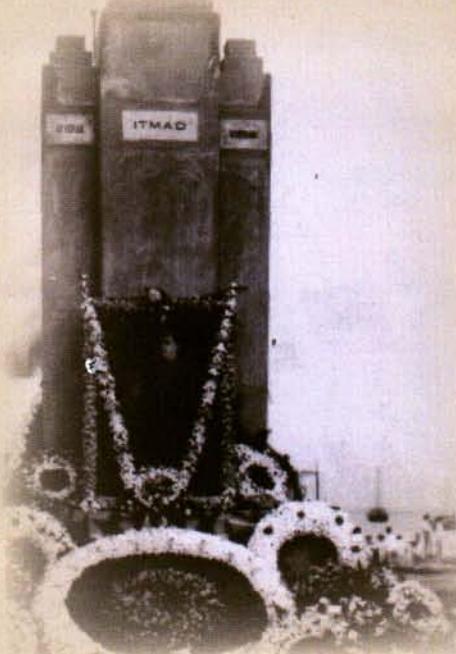
INA in Singapore under Bose, and also the establishment of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. A major part of the exhibition examined the INA's campaign to go "Onward to Delhi" (Chalo Delhi), as its slogan proclaimed. The underlying intent of the exhibition was, as the National Archives of Singapore stated, to show "the historical journey of the INA and its role in India's struggle for freedom. The INA episode demonstrates the common cause that was forged in the 1940s between the nationalists in India and their compatriots in Singapore."

## Social Memories of Netaji

These official and public rememberings of Subhas Chandra Bose's time in Singapore is derived in part from a more extensive network of social memories of an older generation of Indians who personally saw and heard Bose or Netaji as they named him, and were then drawn to support the Indian Independence League and the INA he led. The social memories of this older generation of Indians resident in Singapore were first captured in an oral history project undertaken by the Oral History Centre in the 1980s. The Centre was established in 1979 under the aegis of the National

**Bose laid a foundation stone at the monument in July 1945. The Urdu words inscribed on it read *ittefaq* (unity), *itmad* (faith) and *kurbani* (sacrifice).**

**When the British returned to Singapore, they demolished the memorial barely two months after its installation.**



*The original INA monument.*

*Photo: Courtesy National Archives of Singapore*

Archives to interview people who had personally witnessed or participated in the key events or institutions that define Singapore history, especially of events for which there is scant and fragmentary documentary records. Documenting the Japanese Occupation through the social memories of those who lived through it became a major project of the Oral History Centre. The several hundred hours of interviews with scores of interviewees not only Singapore residents, but also Allied prisoners-of-war and Japanese officials and military commanders, now constitutes a substantive archival record of the Occupation. The information in these interviews enabled the Archives to mount a successful exhibition on the Japanese Occupation of Singapore in 1985, and in 2006 to install a permanent exhibition on the Occupation in the old Ford Factory.

A pervasive theme in almost all the interviews with Indians was the emotional impact which hearing and meeting Netaji had on them. Several decades later, their memories of Netaji are still vivid. Here are some memories from people who remember Netaji's rally at Singapore's Padang in 1943:

**Narayana Karuppiah** (then 17): "...it was a grand meeting. Most of the Indians were at the Padang. And while he was addressing us, there was a heavy rain. And some people brought an umbrella to put on his head. Immediately he smacked and threw off the umbrella. It was also raining, he was standing in the rain. And the people also were in the rain. They did not move even an inch. And we were there until he completed his speech. It was a really long speech, if I am not mistaken a two or three hour speech. It was really a magnetic speech."

**Damodaran:** "The whole Padang was full of people, the whole Padang. And it happened to be a very heavy rain...And I very well remember, somebody hold an umbrella to Netaji. So, he brushed it away and asked, 'Can you provide umbrellas for all these people?'

Oh, that meeting was over and heavy rain, we all walked back home, from Padang right up to Nelson Road we walked."

**Joginder Singh** (then 24): "...when Subhas Chandra Bose spoke, women



'Chalo Delhi' or Onward to Delhi was the Indian National Army's slogan.  
Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau

would simply remove their gold jewellery and threw [them] at his feet. That was their contribution toward his war effort. He was a very impressive speaker, very fiery and he held the crowd in his control, nobody moved until he finished speaking."

These oral history interviews capture the drama of a personal experience with Bose and make for a more personal understanding and remembering of Bose in Singapore than is contained in the fragmentary documentary sources.

#### Academic Reconstructions of Bose

Over and above the public and official remembering of Bose and the social memories of those who personally experienced him, are the academic reconstructions of how Bose should be remembered on the basis of the extant evidence making for a verifiable and objective account of Bose. Sugata Bose's epic biography of Netaji, entitled *His Majesty's Opponent; Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle against Empire* offers an insight into locating the INA leader in the context of Indian and British Empire history. But for Southeast Asia and Singapore, the scholarly accounting of Bose and the Indian National Army is about the tension between the INA as the rallying point of the Indian diaspora's hopes for the motherland and the INA as but one of the numerous volunteer and personal armies established and trained by the Japanese as part of their war strategy of building resistance groups against the returning Allies. Joyce Chapman

Lebra's work *Japanese Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, recently reprinted by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies is still the benchmark study in this area.

In summary, there are then at least three different rememberings of Bose in Singapore. These are the official public remembering of Bose in the context of Singapore's World War II history and shared histories with the region, and second, the personal social memories of a generation of Indian residents drawn to Bose and the INA as a vehicle for their hopes for India. The third is the academic reconstruction of a precise and objective narrative of the time Bose spent in Singapore.

#### LINKS

Oral history interviews, alongside other archival material on Netaji and Singapore related topics can be searched at the 'Access to Archives Online' website at [www.a2o.com.sg](http://www.a2o.com.sg).

Archival Resources concerning Singapore's war-time experiences can be accessed at [www.s1942.org.sg](http://www.s1942.org.sg)

See p. 26 of this volume for more archival material.



Kwa Chong Guan is a co-author of *Singapore: A 700-year History: From Early Emporium to World City* and editor of *S Rajaratnam on Singapore: From Ideas to Reality*. More recently he co-edited *China-ASEAN Sub-Regional Cooperation: Progress, Problems and Prospects* and also *Goh Keng Swee: A Public Career Remembered*.

# In his Footsteps...

KRISHNA BOSE

Chairperson, Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata

**During the night of 19-20 October 1943, Netaji wrote the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Free India. He had a keen sense of humour and announced that all the signatories to the proclamation of Irish Independence were later shot dead. "Who knows what destiny has in store for us?", he said and burst into laughter.**

Singapore played a prominent role in India's last war of Independence. During the Second World War, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose established the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) in Singapore and there gave his stirring call, 'Chalo Delhi' to the Indian National Army. The INA or Azad Hind Fauj began its march towards India, determined to liberate it from British rule. Netaji had arrived in Singapore on 2 July 1943 to a tumultuous welcome. The song, 'Subhasji, Subhasji' that greeted him, proclaimed to the world that the light of Asia had arrived to liberate India and with his arrival there was new hope for the regeneration of Asia.

My first visit to Singapore was in November 1979. The city had changed since the war. But the history of India's freedom struggle still seemed to be strewn all over Singapore. In Boston, there is a 'Freedom Trail' marked in red, which visitors follow to see the landmarks of the American War of Independence. On that visit to Singapore, my husband Sisir Kumar Bose and I, seemed to follow an invisible Freedom Trail, which took us to all the historic sites connected with the memory of the great freedom fighter. It was like leafing through a history book.

Sidhatmanandaji, the Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, told us: "You must begin with the Mission of Singapore." He did not mean the mission building in which we were sitting with him. We were staying at the Ramakrishna Mission guest house, under the affectionate care of Swamiji. This was a new building. The old Ramakrishna Mission building still existed with its puja room and Lecture Hall, which Netaji had frequently visited. On our arrival at the old ashram at Norris Road, Sthitanandaji took charge and showed us around.

First we went to the puja room. It was still in use. The smell of flowers and 'dhup' (incense) gave me an eerie feeling. I had

heard so much about Netaji's late-night visits to this room from SA Ayer and Abid Hasan. Both said he looked remarkably serene and calm when he emerged from his meditations.

SA Ayer had told us that Netaji was not a religious man in the ordinary sense of the term. But he had a deep spiritual faith. It was this faith that sustained him in times of crisis. Everyone knew he carried a small *Gita* and a rosary of *rudraksha* beads with him. But nobody ever saw him perform any religious rites in public. Faced with a crisis in the war situation, he would simply go to the puja room, take off his uniform, put on a silk dhoti and sit down in meditation. When he emerged he passed on a healing touch to Ayer, Abid and others. At times, they too were under great stress.

One fine morning in Singapore, we stood before a closed gate on Meyer Road. We could see the lawn and an impressive two-storey building beyond the gate. My guides were hesitant about going in without permission. Impatient at their hesitation, I just pushed the gate and marched in, amidst a chorus of protests from behind, "Take care, there may be dogs inside!" The lawn was not very well-maintained. Thorny grass got caught in my sari. Netaji used to play badminton here with his colleagues or Raju, his personal doctor. There was a stone table with stone chairs around it. I visualized Netaji: tired after a game resting there with a cup of tea.

I had focused my camera for a shot of the house when suddenly the house came alive. There was laughter and the sound of footsteps. The front door opened with a bang and a Chinese couple and two children walked straight into my camera's view. I told them that long ago a relative had lived in this house and asked if we could just look around. The gentleman recovered from his initial surprise and said, "Oh yes, go ahead." The family got into a car and drove out. Silence gripped the house again.

In this house Netaji had resided as the Head of the Provisional Government of Free India. During the night of 19-20 October 1943 he had written the Proclamation of that Government, sitting in the same house. SA Ayer, in his writings, has recounted that historic night. Netaji sipped black coffee and continued to write in long hand. Abid Hasan and NG Swami took turns to bring the pages to Ayer who went on typing. At the break of dawn the proclamation was ready.

The next day Netaji gave Ayer the full list of signatories to the document. Netaji had always had a keen sense of humour and told them that all the signatories to the proclamation of Irish Independence were later shot dead. "Who knows what destiny has in store for us?", he said and burst into laughter.

Our Freedom Trail led us next to the Cathay Cinema. On 21 October 1943, Netaji read out the proclamation to a packed hall there: "In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation, and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice, we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and strike for India's freedom". He was overwhelmed with emotion while he took the oath to lead the freedom struggle till the last breath of his life.

Earlier in the year, on 4 July, the Cathay Cinema had witnessed another historic meeting. The veteran freedom fighter Rashbehari Bose had handed over to Netaji the leadership of the Azad Hind Movement. Netaji accepted the honour and the responsibility in a stirring speech in Hindustani. He said that on the day that India won freedom it would be for the people of India to decide what kind of government they wanted and who would lead them. For him personally, the only reward would be the liberation of his motherland.

The next day, 5 July, he stood at the Padang and took the salute of the Indian National Army. Standing on the steps of the Municipal Building he declared: "Today is the proudest day of my life. Today it has pleased Providence to give me the unique privilege and honor of announcing to the whole world that India's Army of Liberation has come

**Standing on the steps of the Municipal Building he declared:  
"Today is the proudest day of my life.  
Today it has pleased Providence to give me the unique privilege and honour of announcing to the whole world that India's Army of Liberation has come into being."**



5 July 1943. Bose salutes his INA troops as Maj Gen Mohammad Zaman Kiani looks on.  
Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau.

into being." On 6 July Japan's General Tojo stood by him and witnessed the military parade. Netaji addressed a huge public gathering on 9 July where he gave the call to all expatriate Indians in Southeast Asia for Total Mobilization. The slogan was: "Total Mobilization for a Total War". The civil population responded with great enthusiasm.

The day we visited Farrer Park in Singapore, we actually saw the cradle of the Azad Hind Movement. In February 1942, it was here that Major Fujiwara of the Japanese Army accepted the surrender of 45,000 British-Indian Army soldiers from their British commanding officer. In an unusual speech, Fujiwara declared that the soldiers would not be treated as prisoners of war; they could fight for their motherland's liberation from colonial rule. The first INA, however, did not last long. It was Netaji's arrival a year later that had an electrifying effect on the army as well as the civil population and a glorious chapter of India's freedom struggle unfolded in war-torn Singapore.

The other great achievement of Netaji in Singapore was the formation of the women's wing of the army, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Netaji had envisaged it during his 93-day submarine journey from Europe to East Asia. He gave it shape under the leadership of Lakshmi Sahgal (nee Swaminathan), Janaki Athi Nahappan (nee Davar) and others soon after his arrival in Singapore. We were shown a two-storey house surrounded by a high wall where the first 300 recruits of the women's Regiment were housed and trained. The women of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment subsequently proved their courage and fortitude in difficult times.

Our Singaporean friends took us to the seashore, pointed to an empty space and said: "Here stood the Martyrs' Memorial." It had been Netaji's wish to erect a memorial to the unknown soldiers of the Indian National Army. He chose a place by the seaside and laid the foundation in July 1945. By the first week of September Colonel Cyril John Stracey of the INA built the Memorial there. On his arrival in Singapore, the first thing that Mountbatten did was to blow up the Memorial with dynamite. A very shocking act indeed; professional militaries normally do not show disrespect to enemy dead. But Mountbatten wished to humiliate the Indian patriots who had served in the Azad Hind Movement.

When the Memorial was blown up, the INA soldiers and civilians who had gathered there were overwhelmed with grief. A soldier

distraught with grief shouted: "Mountbatten, you did this to us today, one day you will be blown up like that." Many INA officers recalled this incident when three decades later Mountbatten was assassinated in a bomb blast by the IRA.

The friendly government of Singapore built a small memorial at the spot later. Many visitors from India go and pay their respects there.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had arrived in Singapore on 2 July 1943. He left his Meyer Road residence for the last time on 16 August 1945. We retraced our steps on the Freedom Trail to Meyer Road, where he spent the last few days of his eventful sojourn in Singapore. Netaji was in Seremban when news reached him of the imminent surrender of Japan. Atom bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August. News also reached him that the Soviet Union had joined the war against Japan.

He drove back to Singapore and reached his Meyer Road home in the evening. Ayer accompanied him. In another car, Major Alagappan, Colonel Enayet Kiani and others followed. General Mohammad Zaman Kiani and Colonel Habibur Rahman joined them at the Cabinet meeting at the south facing verandah on the first floor. Raghavan, Thivy and Swami arrived from Malaysia. From the night of 12 August to the early morning of 16 August the cabinet was in session continuously. There were many important decisions to be taken.

Netaji's greatest concern was the safety of the women of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. He was also worried about the future of the young INA cadets who were in the Military Academy of Tokyo. The boys would be stranded there, he feared. But for the Cabinet the most difficult decision was planning where Netaji would move subsequently. Netaji himself wished to stay back in Singapore and surrender there with his army. But his colleagues thought that would be much too risky; the vengeful British would not spare Netaji's life. There was some discussion that he might go underground in Thailand and emerge later at a suitable time. But no final decision could be reached.

The Cabinet adjourned for some time on the evening of 14 August. Netaji went to see a drama performance by the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, on the life of Rani Lakshmibai of

*It was in this house, on Meyer Road, that Netaji wrote the historic Proclamation of Independence through the night of 19 Oct 1943.  
Photo by Krishna Bose*





Netaji at the inauguration of the Boys' Home at the Ramakrishna Mission in Singapore in 1943.  
Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau.

Jhansi, the heroine of the 1857 Revolt. The packed hall burst into applause when Netaji arrived. At the end of the performance all present sang the Indian national anthem.

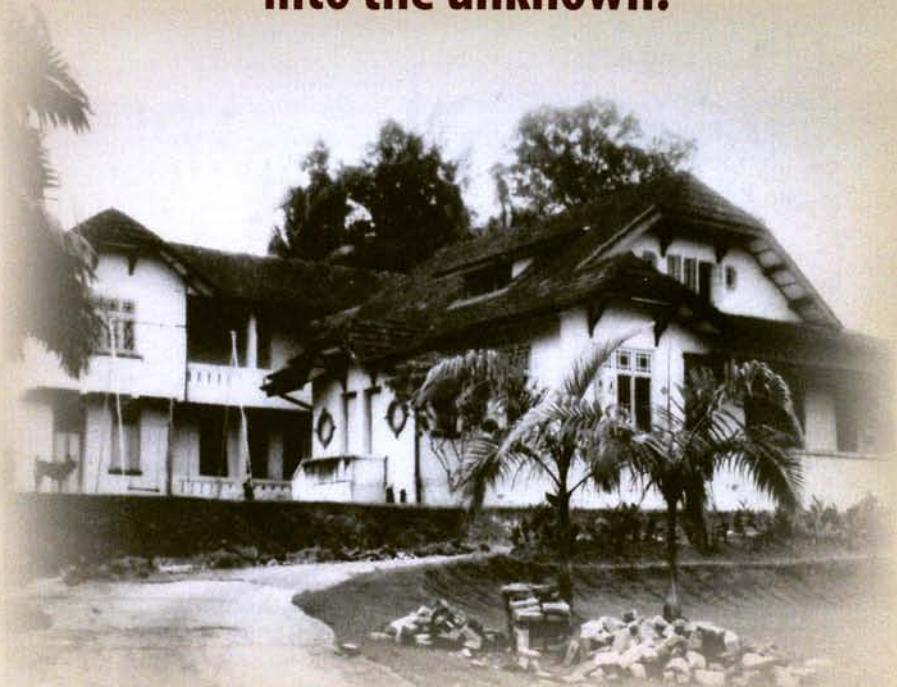
Japan formally surrendered on 15 August. In the morning, in the middle of the Cabinet meeting, Colonel Stracey arrived with the designs of the Martyrs' Memorial. Netaji approved one of the designs and enquired if the memorial could be erected before the Anglo-American forces arrived. "Certainly, Sir," Colonel Stracey replied and left after a smart salute. The others looked at Stracey with wonder mixed with disbelief.

During the deliberations on that day and the following night it was decided that Netaji would leave Singapore the next morning. Netaji left Singapore early in the morning of 16 August 1945 for what he himself described as "an adventure into the unknown." As his plane took off, the curtain came down on the saga of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Singapore.



Krishna Bose, distinguished academic and author of several books on Netaji, has been a three-term member of the Indian Parliament and chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee of External Affairs from 1999 to 2004. She is currently Chairperson of the Netaji Research Bureau, an Institute of International Affairs founded by her husband Sisir Kumar Bose at Netaji's ancestral house in Kolkata.

**Netaji left Singapore early in the morning of 16 August 1945 for what he himself described as "an adventure into the unknown."**



The INA Headquarters on Chancery Lane. Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau.

# The Rani of Jhansi Regiment

JOYCE CHAPMAN LEBRA

Professor Emerita, University of Colorado

**Dozens, then hundreds, of teenage girls from the rubber plantations of Malaya and Burma also volunteered – girls who had never seen India, yet eagerly gave their lives to Netaji and the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.**

Singapore was electrified when Subhas Chandra Bose arrived first by German, then Japanese submarine in the summer of 1943. On 4 July he issued his stunning summons before a packed audience to all Indians in Southeast Asia to rise and join the struggle to free India from the bonds of British rule. His reputation for revolutionary political acts in India and his total dedication to the cause of liberating India had preceded him. Those who heard his sonorous call, not only in Singapore but in Malaya and Burma as well, were electrified and responded in the hundreds, then thousands. His appeal drew soldiers of the Indian National Army and civilians as well, all feeling the magic of his charisma and responding without hesitation.

The Indian National Army, though founded initially by a young Japanese major, Iwaichi Fujiwara, in cooperation with Mohan Singh of the British Indian Army, had languished when Mohan Singh encountered difficulty dealing with the Japanese occupiers after Fujiwara was posted elsewhere.

Netaji's battle cry was, "Chalo Delhi!" and his stentorian voice reverberated with the words, "If you will always follow me in life as well as in death, then I will lead you on the road to victory and freedom."<sup>1</sup> Officers and men of the Indian National Army pledged their loyalty to Netaji and formed the nucleus of burgeoning numbers of the INA.

But Netaji had something more in mind for the female half of the population. At public meetings of 6 and 9 July, he revealed his pet project when he called on all Indian women to rise and, "complete the work the Great Rani undertook in 1857."<sup>2</sup> In invoking the name of the legendary Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi for his women's Regiment, he evoked many cultural themes and memories and reincarnated the historic Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. There was no way he felt that freedom could be won by

only half the population. His appeal met an instantaneous reception in the hearts and minds of young women as they responded to volunteer not only their own services but also, with the well-to-do, their gold jewelry.

The first woman to answer Netaji's call was Dr Swaminathan--coincidentally also named Lakshmi--a young medical doctor who had come to Singapore in 1940. The daughter of a prominent English-educated Madras barrister, she was already a nationalist and had heard Netaji's broadcasts from Tokyo soon after his arrival in Southeast Asia. After she heard him in Singapore, she met with two prominent community leaders and together they devised a surprise for Netaji. She managed to round up twenty women to create a guard of honour for the 12 July parade.

That morning (12 July) Netaji and the Indian residents of Singapore saw a remarkable sight: a women's guard of honour in white saris presenting arms to Netaji. He was thrilled. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment (RJR), he was certain, would inspire Indians everywhere, and he envisioned the RJR marching in the vanguard of the INA as they crossed the Burma border on to Indian soil.

Lakshmi was then called to Netaji's office, where she listened intently as he explained his goals, his opposition to the caste system and his aspirations for a multi-racial, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious India. He asked her if she would be willing to take command of the RJR and then if she needed time to consider. She did not need time, as her decision was already made. Totally energized, she launched into action the next day, provided with a staff car, office, and funds to begin recruitment.

Training began, with INA instructors and rifles in some cases captured by Japanese forces. Lakshmi was incensed when General Renya Mutaguchi, from a culture where women had no place in military tradition, asked her if women of the Regiment could actually fight. "Of course! What is required is



*The Rani of Bose's INA.*

*Photo: Courtesy  
Netaji Research  
Bureau.*

17 July 1943  
edition of the  
Azad Hind  
newspaper.

### **Women Soldiers Of Rani Jhansi Regt. Eager To Fight Freedom Battle With Brothers-In-Arms**

Syuan City, March 31 (Domestic) — Eight months after the call by Netaji for the formation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in Syuan, the first batch of women warriors graduated yesterday afternoon at a grand passing-out parade held before thousands of Indians — members of the Azad Hind Fauj, civilians and schoolchildren.

It was indeed an epochal day — a Red Letter Day — in the history of the Jhansi Regiment. And no one displayed more patriotic fervour and zeal than the Commandant herself, Captain S. Lakshmi, as she appeared on the parade ground.

The Commandant, who also holds the high post of head of Women's Affairs in the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, attired in trim khaki uniform, reviewing the first soldiers of her own women's regiment, was charged with deep emotion and her face betrayed the happiness she felt.

Recently returned from the frontlines where she attended to official duties side by side with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the Commandant yesterday saw the realization of her fondest dreams and aspirations. She had just

ed with emotion as the Rani of Jhansi Regiment's first leader addressed the soldiers under her command.

Chatting amiably with all ranks during the function which followed the parade, Captain Lakshmi unassumingly poured out tea for brother officers of the I.N.A. who had come to witness their sister-soldiers graduate.

To-day is one of the happiest days in my life," she stated in between attending to official work. "I am proud to have been chosen as the leader of this woman's regiment which is named after that most illustrious heroine, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. We will show the British, our enemy, and the world at large that women of India are made of the same mettle as the men of the Azad Hind Fauj."

She concluded: "We women

that the Indo-Nipponese military campaign is nothing more than some diversionary operations and that, in any case, the

**That morning (12 July) Netaji and the Indian residents of Singapore saw a remarkable sight: a women's guard of honour in white saris presenting arms to Netaji. He was thrilled.**

### **Britishers In Grip Of**



*Propped on an easel is a photograph of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, who was the inspiration for these brave young soldiers of Netaji's Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau.*

**Now they had  
a chance not  
only to escape  
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but...to  
live with a  
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if necessary, to  
die for a cause.**

training and discipline. We have both," she replied with spirit.<sup>3</sup> Lakshmi then spent several weeks speaking at rallies in Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh, visiting reluctant well-do-do parents to convince them to allow their protected daughters to join the struggle. In Kuala Lumpur she recruited Janaki Davar and her sister, Papathi and in Ipoh she found Rasammah and Ponnammah Navarednam and others. Most of the officer corps of the RJR was drawn from this group of well-educated young women from Singapore, Malaya, and Burma. Lakshmi remarks of them, "There were quite a number of young women from comfortable homes, who in normal times would not have had any purpose in life and would have lived in refined and placid domesticity...Now they had a chance not only to escape monotony, but...to live with a purpose and, if necessary, to die for a cause," Lakshmi explains.<sup>4</sup>

The seeming anomaly was that dozens, then hundreds of teenage girls from the rubber plantations of Malaya and Burma also volunteered, girls who though they had never seen India, nevertheless eagerly dedicated their lives and perhaps deaths to Netaji and the RJR. Life on the rubber estates, it may be noted, was arduous. Moreover, these young women identified neither with the foreign rulers nor with the indigenous populace. With Netaji's added multi-faceted appeal, they gained a sense of identity, not only as Indians, but as Indians with the goal of liberating India. For all these women, whether educated or not, youth was a time for idealism and adventure. As many as a thousand embraced the opportunity.

When Janaki Davar heard Netaji speak at a rally in Kuala Lumpur, she hastened to the podium and was the first to remove her gold earrings and place them at his feet, and others soon followed suit. At home she worried that her mother would notice that she was without her jewelry, but her father defended her against her mother's wrath, and Janaki persuaded her parents to invite Lakshmi to tea. Janaki joined the regiment and rose to be the second in command of the RJR and played a crucial role in the training of troops and during the retreat from Rangoon.

Rasammah Navarednam, who signed up in Ipoh with two sisters, explains her motivation. "We were already psychologically and emotionally and intellectually prepared. You had the desire to be part of this great movement for

freedom of one's country...."I wanted to die for India."<sup>5</sup>

Training of the RJR was rigorous and gruelling. Military drill and weapons training were part of a daily regimen that began at 6 a.m. Weapons included rifles, hand grenades, bren guns, tommy guns, pistols, mortars, anti-aircraft guns and bayonets. In the afternoon INA officers gave lectures on military history. Route marches at night, carrying backpacks, were part of the curriculum. In the evening the girls organized variety shows and plays, including one written and produced by Lakshmi, entitled "Freedom of Death."

In December 1943, Netaji moved the headquarters of both the INA and the Free India Provisional Government to Rangoon, and he called on Lakshmi to open a camp for the RJR in Thingangyun, a Rangoon suburb. Instructors and nurses were part of the Rangoon contingent of the RJR. They travelled overland, partly on the Thai-Rangoon Railway, the notorious "death railway." Lakshmi also established a branch of the Indian Independence League to recruit civilian volunteers to collect hospital supplies, and dry rations for troops. Training for the Ranis intensified in Burma and included firing live ammunition.

On 30 March 1944, the passing out parade of RJR officers was held, and the eight officers who had passed the INA officers' test were commissioned, making the RJR officially a part of the INA. In April 1944, the first unit of the RJR moved 600 miles further north to the new headquarters of both the INA and Free India Provisional Government at Maymyo. On 15 April Lakshmi left for Rangoon with two other officers and six other ranks by truck convoy, sleeping in trucks at villages en route.

On the evening of 3 May, the RJR barracks were bombed and reduced to rubble. The women had heard the bombers and rushed out to their air raid shelter, enabling all to survive. The Enfield rifles were too heavy for slightly-built Tamil girls and were by this time replaced by lighter Canadian or Dutch rifles captured by the Japanese in Indonesia.

The major part of the history of the RJR occurred between March 1944 and August 1945, when the war ended. By this time and even earlier the INA and Japanese troops were on the defensive, unable to push back British Indian troops who had air

# Janaki led RJR troops on an epic 26-day retreat through the jungles of Burma and Thailand, initially on a goods train, but when it was bombed, slogging through the mud and jungles on foot.



The Rani of Jhansi Regiment, the first women's army in Asia. Janaki in front row, first woman from right. Photo: Courtesy Janaki Nahappan.

cover and superior supply lines. Heavy INA casualties coming into hospitals from the front occupied nurses and even troops of the RJR. Added to these logistic problems was the weather factor, when monsoon rains rendered the jungles nearly impassable and infested with leeches and snakes.

Lakshmi and others were eager to join their INA brothers on the front lines, and with four others she appealed to Netaji with a petition signed in their own blood. By this time, however, the retreat south from Maymyo had begun.

When Netaji announced the retreat to the RJR, many made agonized protests. "No, I don't want to go back. I want to fight for India," Janaki said to Netaji. Retreat, however, was unavoidable. Janaki commanded RJR troops on an epic 26-day retreat through the jungles of Burma and Thailand, initially on a goods train, but when it was bombed, slogging through the mud and jungles on foot. They carried heavy backpacks and often went without food. "Going is heavy, we are night birds," Janaki recorded in her diary. "There are plenty of guerrilla troops in the area and we must be prepared to fight."

Netaji accompanied the 500 girls on the long march, and Janaki felt she had to take care of him, as he was heedless of his own welfare and health. During the train journey of the march, two girls were killed when the train was attacked, the only fatalities suffered by the RJR. Rather than join the march back, Lakshmi told Netaji she preferred to go where she could be of service, and her story continues at a hospital in

Kalaw and other points for several more months in Burma.

At one point when she and two others were captured by Japanese forces and tied to a tree, she expected to be executed. Instead, she was saved when a Japanese officer recognized her from a photograph in a magazine and ordered her released. She survived to continue her medical practice and to work for the welfare of veterans and women in Kanpur, India. In 2002 she ran on the CPI(M) ticket for president of India, not with the expectation of winning but to ensure that Indians never forget the contribution of the INA and RJR to independent India. She continues to stress passionately that the Rani of Jhansi Regiment fought not only to liberate India from foreign rule but also to free women from subjugation to men.

In his revolutionary summons to battle to all Indian women in Southeast Asia, Netaji encapsulated many echoes and cultural elements: reverence for the Cosmic Mother and Bharat Mata, belief in the cosmic female power of Shakti, faith in the plethora of mother goddesses, the appeal of the symbol of martyrdom in the shedding of blood, and the agency of gender.

The fact that rumours of Netaji's survival as a *sannyasi* (ascetic) somewhere in Asia abound and that India will not allow the Netaji legend to die is a recognition that what he, the INA and the Rani of Jhansi Regiment fought for is still vitally relevant for India today. This legacy stands as a model of equality and harmony for Indian democracy.

## NOTES

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3. Interview with Lakshmi Sahgal, Kanpur, 23 March 2007; also see Lakshmi Sahgal, *A Revolutionary Life: Memoirs of a Political Activist*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997.
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Professor Joyce Chapman Lebra has taught the history of Japan, India, and Asia-Pacific women at the University of Colorado. She is the author of 14 works of non-fiction and fiction and has lectured widely around the world.

# A Rani on Horseback

## Conversations with Datin Janaki Athi Nahappan

**Captain Janaki's** still vivid memories bring her days in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment to life.

An interview by NILANJANA SENGUPTA.

### INTERVIEW



Captain Janaki Davar.

Janaki would ride on horseback from the RJR camp at Helpin Road to the army hospital at Mingaladon, around 15 miles away.

One day Netaji stopped her enroute and said, "Ms Davar, let me show you a few things about good horsemanship."

Datin Janaki Athi Nahappan, still fondly called Captain Janaki by her old acquaintances, lives not far away from the steel and glass spires of the Petronas Towers. Yet the flow of contemporary life seems to have left her house largely untouched. The Datin, at 86, lives her life surrounded by Netaji memorabilia: an old portrait of Netaji flanked by AC Chatterjee, MZ Kiani and Habibur Rahman stands with her family photographs, a glass mural of the Rani of Jhansi adorns her living room wall and the mention of the leader's name never fails to bring an unexpected rush of tears to her eyes. She browses through dusty volumes of sepia toned photographs and as she does so, images of a bygone era unfold, an era when patriotism was palpable, awakening the Indian community to new convictions and challenges...

#### Joining the Rani of Jhansi Regiment:

Janaki was 18 when one afternoon in July 1943 she stole to the Selangor Padang to hear Subhas Chandra Bose. It was a large gathering of mostly Indians – plantation workers squatted on the ground in front while the women stood at a diffident distance. Netaji arrived in an open car with two outriders at the front and spoke in Hindustani which was largely incomprehensible to this young girl, though she eagerly heard the Tamil interpretation of the speech by Mr Chidambram, a senior League

member. A second generation migrant to Malaya, Janaki had never seen India (and would not visit India till November 2000, when she went to collect the Padma Shri conferred on her by the Indian President) and yet the country came alive in the word-pictures so deftly drawn by Bose. Emotionally moved, Janaki raised her fist to the cries of "*Bharat mata ki jai!*" and went up to the raised platform where Bose and Captain Lakshmi were seated. She was the first woman to respond to the INA's call and next morning's papers carried the news of her donating her personal jewellery to the cause. Huge posters lined Ampang Street or Chetty Street (as it was then called because of the Chettiaris living there) of Kuala Lumpur. Other women signed-up thereafter – Buddhist Josephine and Christian Stella who came from Rifle Range and would die an early death during the retreat; Anjalay who joined from the Senthul district of Kuala Lumpur; Ahilandam, born of a Chinese mother and an Indian father who sent her 10-year-old daughter away to caregivers in Madurai before enlisting as a Rani. Janaki had unwittingly pioneered a trend.

#### The Rani of Jhansi Camp in Singapore:

Janaki and her sister Papathi moved to the Rani of Jhansi Camp on Waterloo Street in Singapore, much to the dismay of their family. They would spend the next six months here in intensive military training, preparing for the onward march to the Indo-Burma border battlefield. Camp life for these girls, brought up in relative luxury in an upper-middle class household, was not easy. They lived in attap sheds, slept on narrow wooden planks and had no blanket or pillow till an uncle living in Singapore brought them these little amenities. Breakfast

was an unappetizing helping of *ragi* while the *langar* commanders dished up something equally unappealing for the other meals of the day. Every afternoon the girls travelled in open trucks to the Bidadari Camp for their military training and would return only in the evening. Yet, despite the obvious discomforts, they did not take long to get accustomed to camp life – at night they would get together to sing patriotic songs and soon forged new ties of friendship.

Under orders of Netaji, no male was allowed entry into their camp – the sentries at the front gate were female and so were the visiting doctors. Female tailors came in the initial days to fit out the girls in their new uniforms. Each camp resident received two sets – one was full length for formal occasions while the other set consisted of shorts and half sleeved shirts. The uniforms in the beginning were a plain khaki and the INA tri-colour bands were added only later. Janaki recalls the initial hesitation of her camp colleagues to wear the uniform and walk the streets of Singapore for their route marches. It was Netaji's words of encouragement which helped them persist, despite the jeering crowds at Bras Basah Road.

While at Singapore, Janaki and the girls gave a performance at the Cathay Theatre. Janaki played herself – a young girl leaving home to join the nationalist cause. As the girls sang '*Kadam kadam badaye ja*' (March together towards victory) and donations for the INA poured in, what mattered most to Janaki



Janaki leading the Guard of Honour for Aung San and his wife.  
Photo: Courtesy Janaki Nahappan.

was the applause she received from Netaji.

#### Last days in Singapore:

Janaki returned to Singapore in August 1945 after the gruelling retreat from Burma – she and her group of girls had walked for 26 days under constant enemy fire to reach Moulmein and then taken a goods train to Thailand. Netaji had been with them every step of the way, walking at the head of the column. During the last year and a half they had seen life at its worst in war-torn Rangoon. The Ranis had nursed the few

surviving INA soldiers when the British bombed the army hospital at Myang. They had travelled in a goods train and taken refuge in leech infested paddy fields, been bullied by the communist guerrilla and spent nights huddled in way-side schools and villages during the return journey. Janaki led her platoon of girls to safety and ensured they reached their homes in different towns in Malaya. By the time she reached Singapore, the Japanese had surrendered and Netaji was preparing to leave on yet another undisclosed journey. Janaki recalls: "He gave me a signed copy of his photograph and said, 'Don't worry, Janaki. The British will never get me - dead or alive.' That was the last time she saw him."

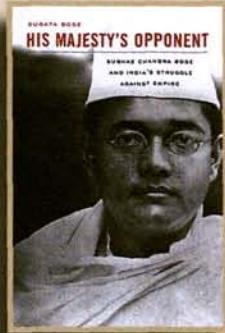
Ahilandam (*left*), born of a Chinese mother and an Indian father, sent her 10-year-old daughter away to caregivers in Madurai before being recruited as a Rani. Janaki had pioneered a trend.

Janaki considers Netaji as one of the greatest leaders till date, "who worked more than anyone else" and to whose call she would not hesitate to respond even today.



Nilanjana Sengupta is the author of the forthcoming book *A Gentleman's Word: The Legacy of Subhas Chandra Bose in Southeast Asia*. She has been a freelance feature writer for several leading Indian dailies and is now Visiting Research Fellow at ISEAS.





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Speeches from the Singapore launch of the book appear on pp. 10-11 of this volume.

# Roads to Delhi

**SUGATA BOSE**

*Gardiner Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs, Harvard University*

Upon his return to Singapore on 25 November 1943, Netaji plunged into the final preparations for the march towards India. In the second week of December he made a final swing through Indonesia to garner the support of Indians based in Jakarta and Surabaya on the island of Java as well as those living in Borneo and Sumatra. This tour completed Bose's attempt to reach Indians living in nearly all parts of Japanese-occupied Asia.

While Japan was clearly the colonial aggressor in Northeast Asia with a dark record of oppression in Korea and China, the situation in Southeast Asia was more complex. Even here the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore felt the brunt of Japan's wartime brutalities. Yet in this vast region Japan had also played an instrumental role in defeating and destroying the mystique of Western imperial powers – the British in Burma and Malaya, the French in Indo-China, the Dutch in the East Indies, and the Americans in the Philippines. In Indo-China the Japanese found it expedient to work with the Vichy French and shifted too late in 1945 to supporting some Vietnamese nationalists. This enabled the communists in the Viet Minh to adopt the nationalist mantle. Elsewhere, the Japanese supported Asian nationalists to a greater or lesser degree. The Indians, the Burmese, the Indonesians and some Malays and Filipinos took advantage of the Japanese undermining of Western colonial authority to advance their own independence movements.

In Indonesia Mohammad Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta had been released from long years in Dutch prisons by the Japanese. They accepted Japanese help to build their civilian administration and train their military between 1942 and 1945. Even though the Indonesian proclamation of independence did not come until August 1945, wartime developments would make a Dutch reconquest of Indonesia as difficult as

the re-assertion of British colonial rule in Burma. That Japan had undermined the British and other Western colonial powers in Southeast Asia was what mattered to Bose, despite the deplorable Japanese aggression towards the Chinese and other Asians.

Bose's provisional government extended its protective umbrella over Indians living in all these lands. It obtained *de jure* control over a piece of Indian territory when the Japanese handed over the Andaman and Nicobar islands in late December 1943, even though *de facto* military control was not relinquished by the Japanese admiralty. Bose redeemed his rash promise of setting foot on Indian soil before the year's end by arriving in Port Blair on 29 December 1943, for a three-day visit to these islands. As usual his visit was steeped with symbolism. The British had imprisoned some of India's greatest revolutionaries in the notorious Cellular Jail on the Andaman island where many had spent a rigorous life sentence and not a few had been sent to the gallows. Netaji paid tribute to the revolutionaries who had suffered there and likened the opening of the gates of Cellular Jail to the liberation of the Bastille. He hoisted the Indian tricolour at the Gymkhana grounds in Port Blair to the singing of the national anthem. Before his departure he renamed Andaman as 'Shaheed' ('Martyrs') and Nicobar as 'Swaraj' ('Freedom') islands.<sup>1</sup> During a visit to Bangkok a few days later he appointed AD Logonadan the Chief Commissioner of these islands. The Thais, Hugh Toye writes, were "at their best, charming, hospitable, generous, eager to do honor to one who, none dared doubt, would soon march invincibly into India".<sup>2</sup>

Before the close of 1943, Netaji's secret agents had already reached Calcutta. Soon after his arrival in Singapore, he had felt the need for a wireless link with Bengal. The spies that the Japanese

had sent into India had not been very successful. Bose tried to assert control over intelligence operations based in Penang and Rangoon and put NG Swami in charge of what came to be called the Azad School. Four well-trained intelligence operatives – Bhagwan Lu, Harbans Lal, Kanwal Singh and Kartar Singh – had accompanied Swami on the journey from Europe to Asia on the blockade runner, SS Osorno, in March 1943. Bose, Swami and Hasan now put these four together with another four trained in Penang and dispatched this group of eight under the leadership of SN Chopra towards India on board a Japanese submarine on 8 December 1943.<sup>3</sup>

The group landed with their sophisticated wireless equipment, weapons and money on the Kathiawar coast of Gujarat on the night of 22–23 December 1943. They were instructed to split into four pairs and head towards Bengal, the North-West Frontier, the United Provinces in northern India, and Bombay. Late in December, Bhagwan Lu under the cover of his pseudonym TK Rao, called at Woodburn Park in Calcutta to see Sisir Kumar Bose, the nephew who had driven Subhas during his January 1941 escape. After a spell in prison for taking part in the Quit India movement, Sisir was then home-interned with permission to travel to Medical College for his studies. The family was in mourning as Prabhavati, the matriarch, had just passed away. Rao handed Sisir a handwritten message in Bengali from Subhas on the letterhead of the Indian Independence League at 3, Chancery Lane in Singapore dated "Sri Sri Kali Puja" 29 October 1943, the day of the worship of the mother goddess Kali. Subhas had told Sarat and Sisir that his messages in Bengali would be genuine, while those in English might be intended to mislead the British. Both Sisir and his mother Bivabati recognized Subhas's handwriting. Sisir then put Rao in touch with those members of the underground organization Bengal Volunteers who had managed to stay out of prison.<sup>4</sup>

In January 1944, radio contact was successfully established between Calcutta and Subhas Chandra Bose in Burma. One of the earliest messages transmitted did not contain any valuable military intelligence. It conveyed the news of Prabhavati's death. "You look tired," Debnath Das said to Netaji that evening. "No, I am not tired," Bose replied. "I heard today that I have lost my mother."<sup>5</sup>



Netaji strides out of the notorious British Cellular Jail in the Andamans in 1943. He likened the opening of the gates of the jail to the storming of the Bastille.  
Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau.

#### NOTES

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5. Sisir Kumar Bose, *Bosubari*, p. 159.

**Subhas had told Sarat and Sisir that his messages in Bengali would be genuine, while those in English might be intended to mislead the British.**

# A Glimpse into History

*Archival research by Jayati Bhattacharya, Kyaw San Wai, Lu Caixia*

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's stirring declaration of the establishment of Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind or the Provisional Government of Free India in 1943 at Singapore's Cathay Cinema (see the photograph below) was reported extensively by the media of the time. Singapore, at the centre of Bose's wartime activities, possesses a rich archive of documents, photographs, letters, newspaper clippings, oral history records, propaganda leaflets and other data, which illuminate Bose's efforts to free India from colonial rule.

The NSC team, assisted by the National Archives of Singapore and the Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata, has trawled through a wide range of archival records to put together a portrait of that tumultuous moment in history.



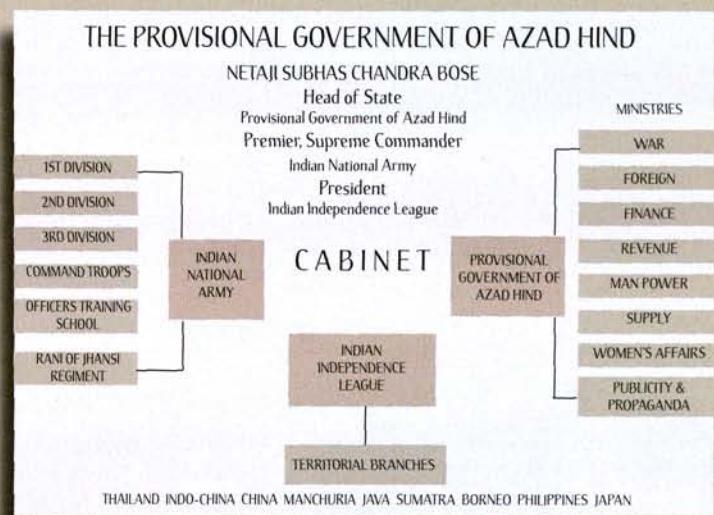
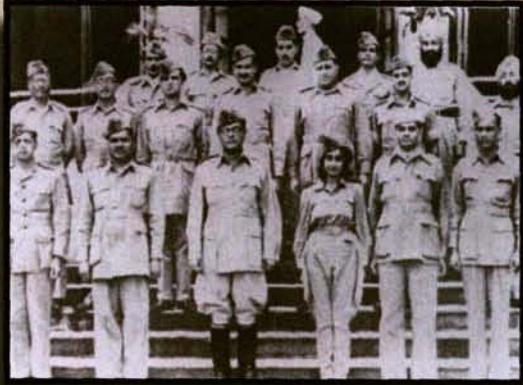
*21 October 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose proclaimed the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India at Singapore's Cathay Cinema. Photo: Courtesy ISEAS Library.*

# Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind

The government of Azad Hind had its own currency, court and civil code, which provided credibility to its struggle against the British. But it lacked any sovereign territory. However, once it gained control of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from Japan in 1943, and came to occupy parts of Manipur and Nagaland, it possessed the main elements required for a legitimate government.

Although the movement did not survive the death of Subhas Chandra Bose, the tide of nationalism it inspired contributed very substantially to India's independence.

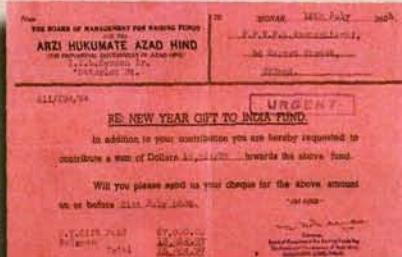
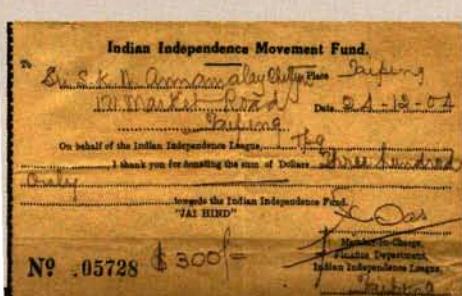
Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau



**Bose's Cabinet:** The Provisional Government of Free India had its own Cabinet (photograph above) with Bose as Head of State. The various ministries and the departments they oversaw were clearly structured. Lt Col AC Chatterjee was Minister of Finance while Dr Lakshmi Swaminathan was Minister in charge of Women's Organizations, besides being in charge of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. SA Ayer looked after broadcasting and publicity.



"By early April 1944, the Azad Hind government was issuing postage stamps (above left) for use in the liberated zones, and was printing sample currency notes (above right). If anything, Bose's plans for postwar reconstruction in India had run ahead of successful implementation of a war strategy." – Prof Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent* (p. 273). Allegedly a ship carrying the stamps printed in Germany was torpedoed on its way to Japan. Images: Courtesy Herbert A. Friedman



There was also an Azad Hind Bank, capitalized at several million rupees from donations by wealthy Indians, evidence of which exists in receipts like the ones on the left.

Images: Courtesy Herbert A. Friedman

# Syonan Days, INA, and the Press

Newspaper articles published in Singapore and Malaya over the period of 1941 to 1945 in English, Chinese, Japanese and Tamil reflected the socio-political environment of the time, highlighting the alliances, the declaration of war and the contests in different battle zones during the Japanese Occupation and through the duration of the War. During the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, or Syonan as it was then called, the Japanese had absolute control over the press and the radio. *The Straits Times* was renamed *The Syonan Times* and was published by the Syonan Shimbun-kai, with a morning Japanese edition and an English edition in the afternoon. The Japanese edition, priced at five cents, was initially called the *Syonan Sinbun*, and a year later, the *Syonan Shimbu*. A Chinese edition came out under the name *Syonan Jit Pau*, while a Malay edition was called the *Berita Malai*. Another Malay edition, the *Malai Sinpo*, was published from Kuala Lumpur.

*Azad Hind*, the mouthpiece of the Indian Independence League, was in circulation from February 1942, and provides interesting information on sources of funding for the INA. The numerous advertisements suggest robust support from Indian businesses in Singapore. A Tamil edition of *Azad Hind* circulated within the Tamil community. These newspapers are useful historical sources for understanding Subhas Chandra Bose's sojourn in Singapore, as well as the nature of his engagement with Japan, Asia and the world.



Newspaper images: Courtesy ISEAS Library.

## Propaganda leaflets

To recruit men and women into the INA in Southeast Asia, the Indian Independence League and the INA distributed leaflets to the Indian community to highlight British colonial exploitation. At the same time, the Japanese also ran their own propaganda campaign which sought to instigate Indian troops to rise up against the Allied powers, the British in particular.



*Right:* This Japanese leaflet shows an angry Indian soldier bayoneting a British soldier. The text, in Hindi, Bengali and Urdu reads: "Use your weapons against the tyrannical Englishmen. The Indian National Army is coming. Join them and march towards New Delhi!"

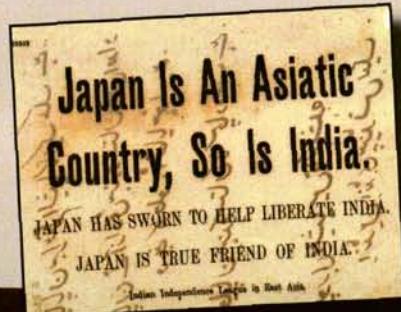


The leaflet above shows two scenes in India: on the left is death and destruction after Indians have gone to war for the British and on the right the happiness and prosperity that would result were Indians to refuse to fight for the Allied forces.

The Japanese designers of this leaflet had scant knowledge of an Indian lifestyle accounting for the incongruities in the depiction. The text, in Hindi and Bengali, reads:

**"As slaves of the British - Hunger and Death rule.**

**After independence – Happiness and Peace rule.”**



Above: Another Japanese anti-British leaflet that shows an English couple feasting while Indians lie dead on the floor. The text in Hindi and Bengali reads: "Kill all the British who are sucking Indian blood."

"Kill all the British who are sucking Indian blood."



All images:  
Courtesy  
Herbert A.  
Friedman



**Above:** This Indian Independence League cartoon shows Churchill riding on the back of an Indian soldier who is killing his own people and walking on the fallen body of Mahatma Gandhi, while Roosevelt stands in the background, collecting money. Part of the text in Hindi reads: "All the wealth of the British is yours - which has been stolen from you. Snatch all of your money and wealth from the British. The British are looting India using Indians."

# The brave young men and women who fought for India's freedom

These young men, women and boys gave their lives, their youth, their homes, their savings, for a homeland some had never seen. The valour displayed by INA soldiers in Southeast Asia inspired innumerable Indians. Nilanjana Sengupta spoke with some of these valiant men and women whose memories of their days in the INA have never faded.



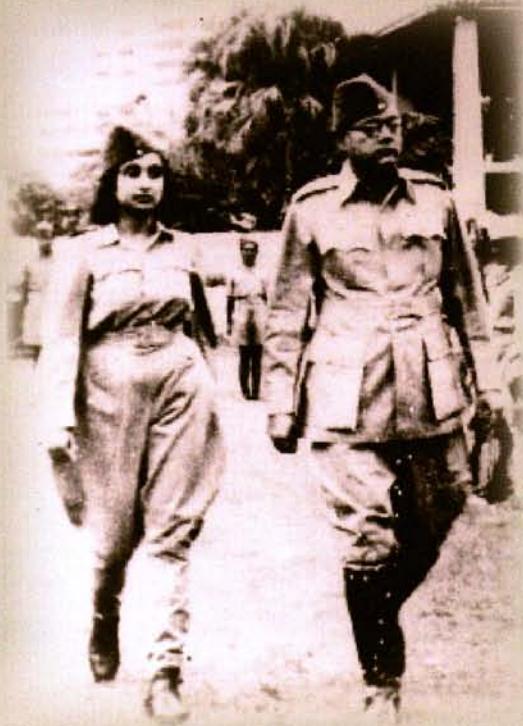
For coupling release



In August 1945 after the gruelling retreat from Burma, Captain Janaki and her group of girls had walked for 26 days under constant enemy fire to reach Singapore. They had travelled in a goods train, taken refuge in leech-infested paddy fields, were hounded by Communist guerrillas, spending nights huddled in wayside schools and villages. Despite these odds, Janaki led her platoon of girls to safety and ensured that they reached their homes in Malaya.

Janaki Davar was 18 when she was stirred by Netaji's speech and joined the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.

Photo: Courtesy Janaki Nahappan



Lakshmi Swaminathan was a well-established and successful gynaecologist in Singapore when she gave up her thriving practice to lead the troops of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.

Photo: Courtesy Netaji Research Bureau

*Right:* Balak Sena, the youth wing of the INA. According to Bala Chandran, this photograph of the Balak Sena was presented to Pandit Nehru when he visited Singapore in 1946. Photo: Courtesy Kishore Bhattacharya.



Photo: Madan Kunnavakkam

*Left: Then and now,* Ramiah (in dark trousers) and Ponnampalam. Ponnampalam remembers seeing Indian men being taken away in trucks to work on the treacherous Siam-Burma railway. When the Japanese invaded, he signed up for the INA. He was only 16. Ramiah remembers the day the train that he was in charge of was attacked near Johore and all the military supplies stolen.



The young boys of the Balak Sena were trained to infiltrate the British Indian Army and gather intelligence at the Indo-Burma border. Photo: Courtesy Ramiah



*Above left:* Kishore Bhattacharya with his uncle CD Bhattacharya (seated). In their family, the older generation joined the INA and the younger generation the Balak Sena. Photo: Courtesy Kishore Bhattacharya  
*Above right:* Kishore Bhattacharya with filmmaker Shyam Benegal at the ISEAS-sponsored screening of *Bose The Forgotten Hero* in 2010 at the Cathay Cinema. "I wept through the entire film," the INA veteran told reporters after the screening. Photo: Courtesy Kishore Bhattacharya



# Memories of the INA

**"When Bose came, I walked 10 miles to hear him speak"**

— INA veteran Kishore Bhattacharya

"Those days our spirits were different you know. We happily survived on a daily breakfast of soya beans fried in vegetable oil and a lunch of soya beans and ubi. We just wanted to see a free India."

— Girish Kothari

"I didn't know Hindi so I caught only a few words from Netaji's rousing speech but I was still moved to tears. That night I could not go to sleep. I knew I had to do something.

The next morning I was at the INA headquarters to join the Balak Sena, the youth wing. I was 14."

— Bala Chandran

"Camp life was rigorous and well-organized. There was not a free moment to laze around. At a time when there were rampant food shortages in town, food in the camp was by and large good and sufficient. At the Officer Training School we stayed in dormitories where 40 to 50 cadets slept together on the floor with a thin cotton mattress and sheet, with no pillow." — Girish Kothari



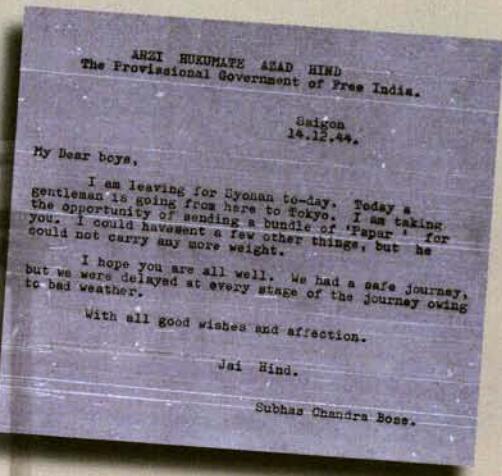
Bose's rally at the Padang in Singapore on 5 July 1943.

“ During our INA days we were exposed to the writings of Bernard Shaw and Karl Marx and to the ideals of the Fabian Society and the American and French Revolution[s]. At the Officer Training School we attended history lessons on the Indian Independence struggle and learnt about great leaders.”

— INA veteran Girish Kothari



Photo: Courtesy ISEAS Library



In this letter addressed to “My Dear Boys”, Bose writes about sending “a bundle of ‘Papar’ (or poppadums from Bengal)” for the cadets in Tokyo. In another letter, he wrote: “I look forward to the happy day when you will return to India – it will be AZAD HIND when you return – as full-fledged Soldiers and as guardians of India’s independence.”

— Copy of letter: Courtesy the National Archives of Singapore

“There was an Indian family in our kampong – they sold their house and donated all their possessions to the INA. All the members joined. The two young daughters joined RJR, one of whom I saw later playing the drum at the head of the women’s march. I passed the RJR HQ a number of times at Waterloo Street and noticed that even the sentry at the gate of the camp was a lady. The RJR women visited the Kampong on Sundays in their natty uniforms. The elderly men and women of the Kampong didn’t like that at first.” — Bala Chandran



“The Balak Sena School held regular classes with emphasis on Indian history. I played the role of Shahid Bhagat Singh’s second-in-command in a play staged by the Balak Sena. The play became famous and we would be invited for performances to other camps like Seletar and Bidadari camps. We would all travel in lorries.

I remember going for morning runs down Stevens Road and Balmoral Road.” — Bala Chandran

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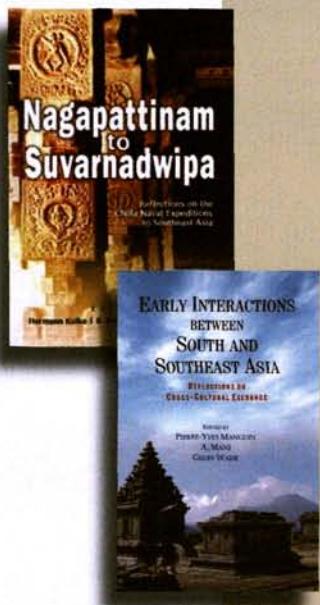
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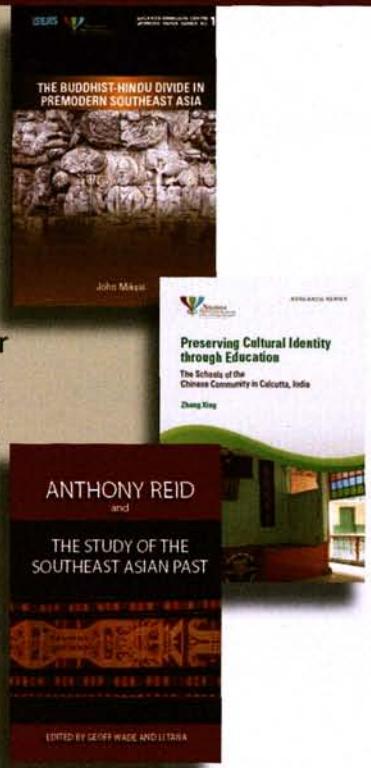
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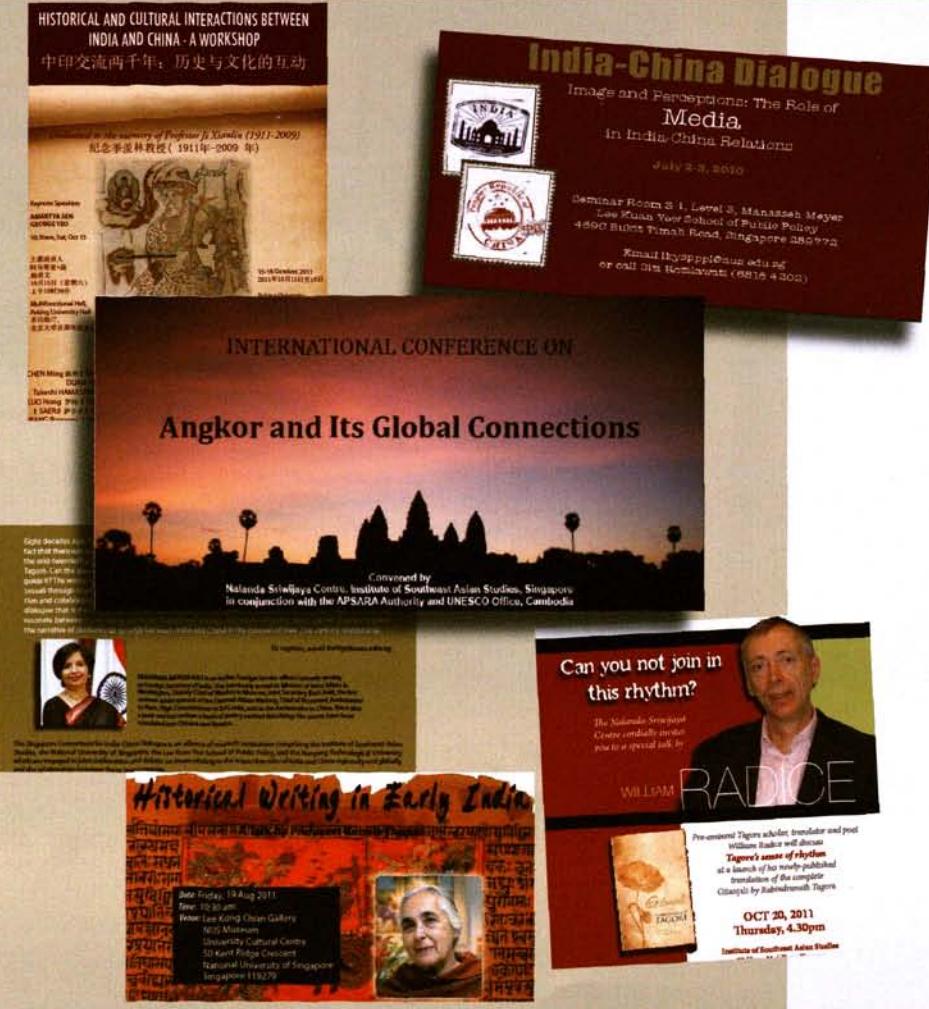
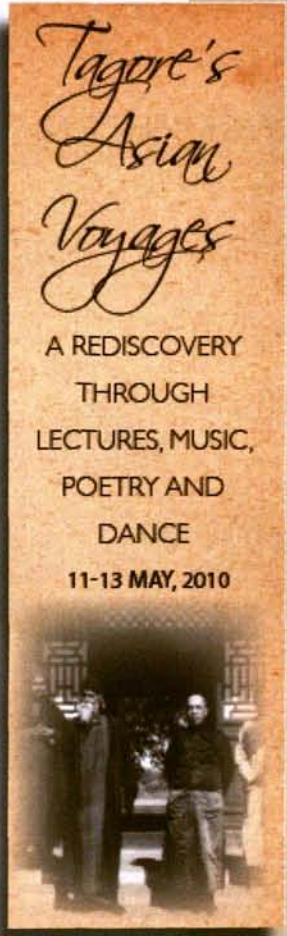
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